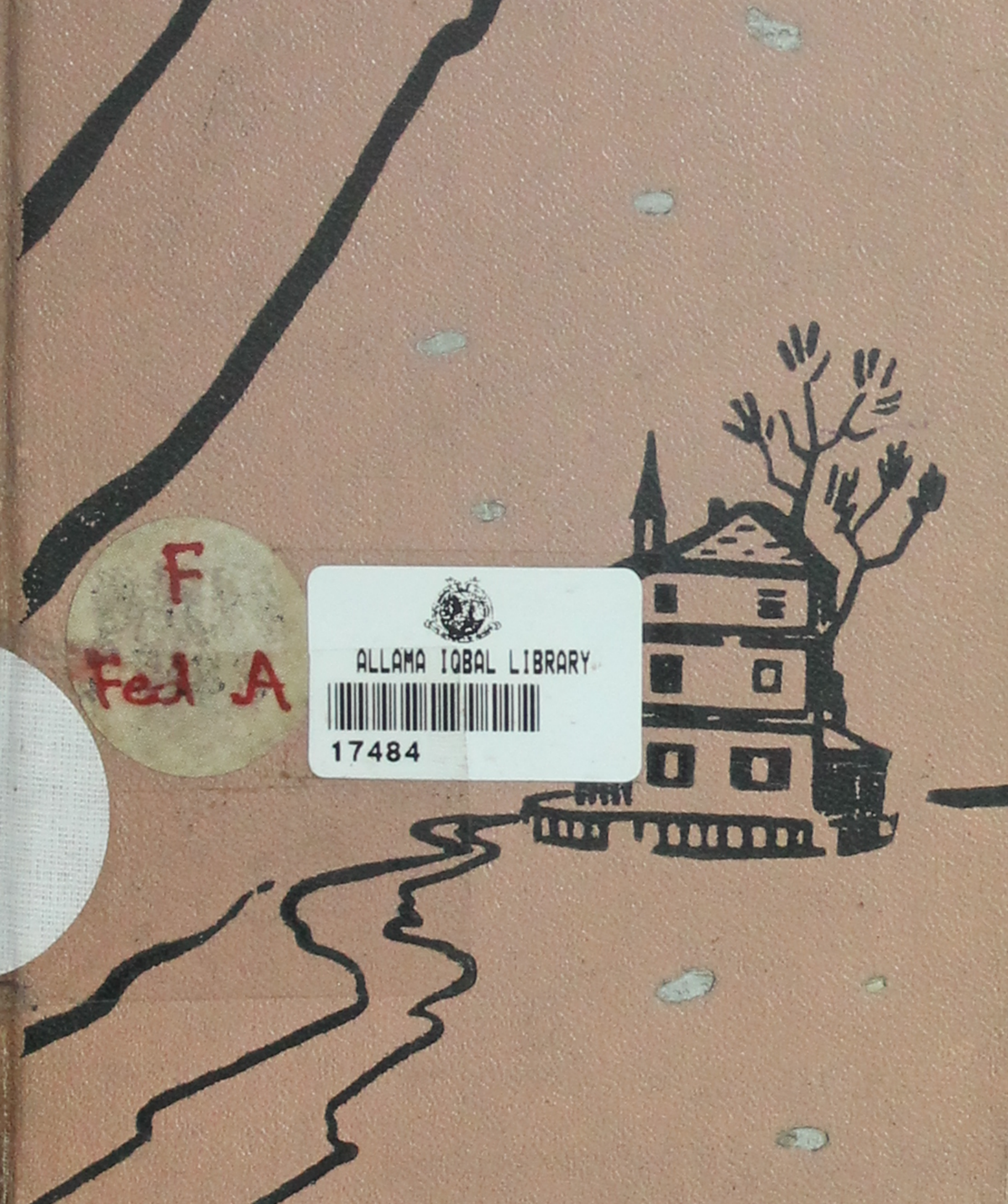

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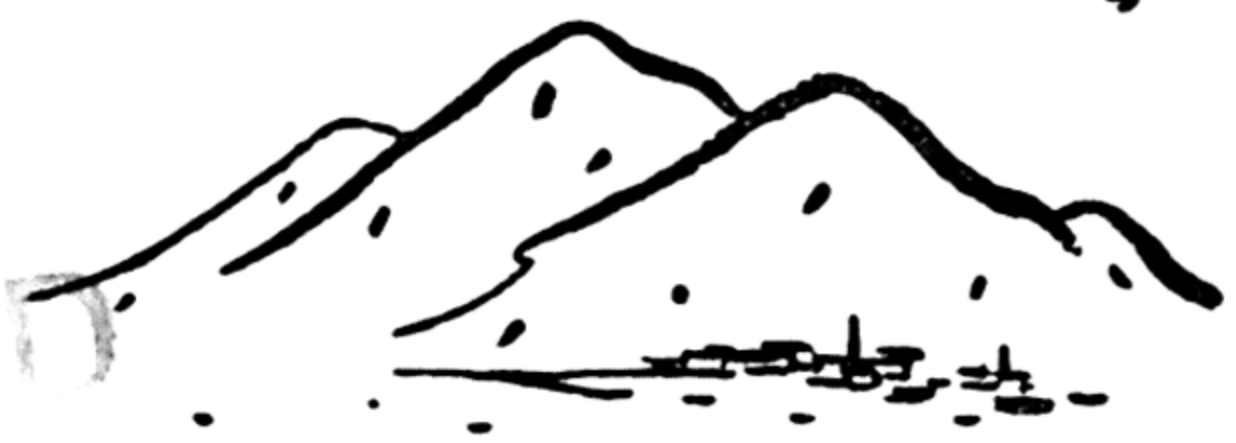

ИЗДАТЕЛЬСТВО ЛИТЕРАТУРЫ
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KONSTANTIN

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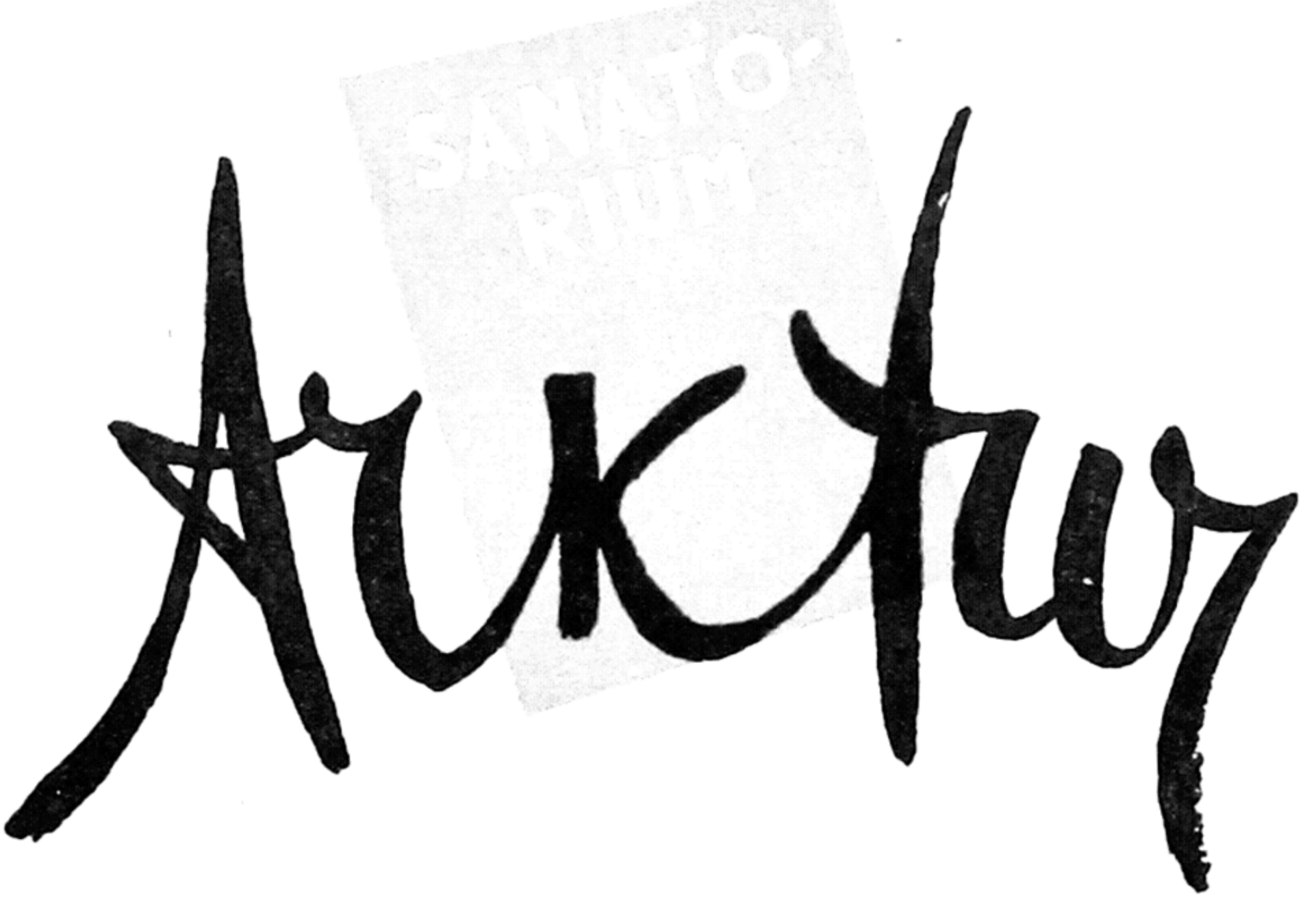

FOREIGN LANGUAGES
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MOSCOW

Translated from the Russian by OLGA SHARTSE
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ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Konstantin Alexandrovich Fedin was born in Saratov, on the Volga, in 1892.

The majestic Russian river with its songs and legends, its unwieldy ships, strings of rafts and riverside orchards gave the writer his first conception "of the Russian land as the 'world' and the Russian people as 'man.'" The galleries of the Radishchev Museum, the city's theatres and music shaped his early notions of the beautiful.

Then came Petrograd with its traditions in art and culture, its century-old romanticism of revolutionary struggle and the glory of the October Revolution, which complemented Fedin's poetical conception of reality.

Gorky with his experienced eye unerringly singled out the young newcomer as a real writer, a writer for life, which Fedin actually came to be.

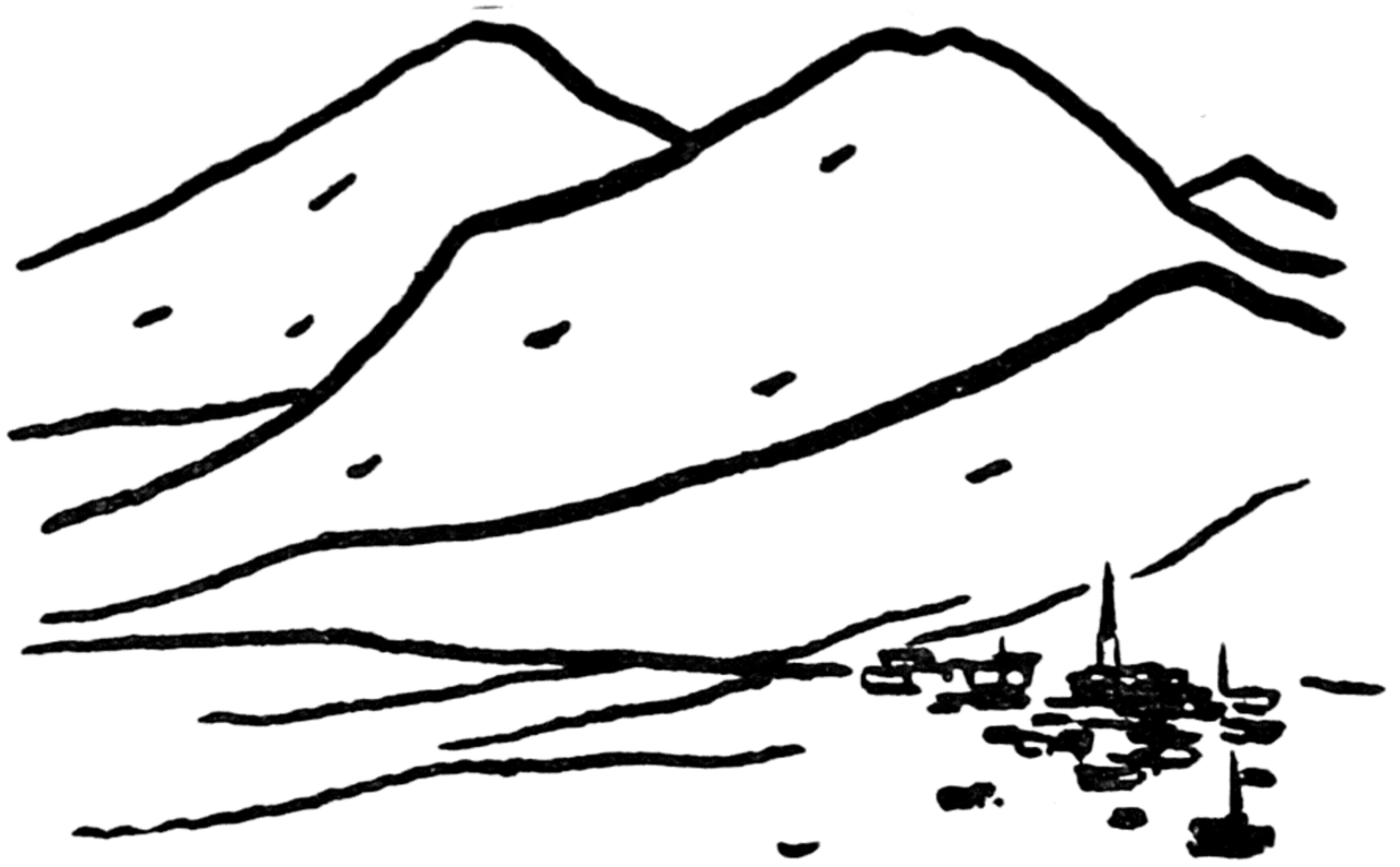
Fedin has travelled widely in Europe. He lived for long periods in Germany and Switzerland, and also visited Norway, Holland, Denmark, Austria, Czechoslovakia, Rumania, Hungary, Poland, and other countries.

His novels *Abduction of Europe* (1934) and *"Sanatorium Arktur* (1940) are based on his travel impressions: the latter is autobiographical to a certain extent and was written after a stay at a Davos sanatorium in 1931.

The destinies of his Russian heroes in *Towns and Years* (1924) and *Brothers* (1928) were invariably entwined with the destinies of men of different European nations. Fedin wrote *First Joys* and *No Ordinary Summer* in 1943-48, which he calls a "historical work

based upon purely Russian material." At present Fedin is working on a third book, which will turn the work into a trilogy.

Fedin is a public figure as well as a writer. He takes an active part in educating the younger generation of Soviet writers. He was elected a delegate to three all-Union peace conferences, and is a member of the Soviet Peace Committee and a delegate of the Supreme Soviet of the Russian Federation.



I

DOCTOR KLEBE was fast becoming insolvent. His creditors had appointed administrators and once a week their accountant presented himself at the sanatorium to check the receipts from patients and to deduct as much as possible towards the settlement of Klebe's debts.

Until a short while ago there had not been a vacancy at Arktur and some discrimination in admitting new patients seemed only natural. But for over a year now fewer patients had been coming to Davos, and Klebe maintained that never before had people been so niggardly: they were saving even on medicine, to say nothing of their feigned indifference to such things as a glass of Italian vermouth or a ride on a horsedrawn sleigh with bells jingling in the harness.

Hatless, wearing his white coat, Klebe stood on the balcony and screwed up his eyes by force of habit at the glittering summit of Tintzenhorn, proudly towering above the distant ridge of mountains. There was a thick blanket of snow; up in the mountains it was already tinted with blue, while down in the valley it still bore the flush of untarnished, rosy dawn. The season should have been well under way, winter had set in, but it was quiet, much too quiet.

Klebe turned the radio to face the balconies of the patients. The overture to *Rienzi*, ringing and alluring, was on the air. The doctor, a radio listener of experience, instantly recognized it to be a broadcast of recorded music and said:

"They've gone mad on economy!"

He drummed his fists on the balustrade in time with the commanding music and his irritation was gradually dispelled. He loved Richard Wagner, and though he thought *Rienzi* a

poor opera, he recognized that it, too, had something of Wagner's stirring power of assertion. He began to shake his head to the rhythm. He mused on life's vicissitudes, on the chance that his natural talent for music might suddenly be universally recognized and he would be appointed conductor of the Berlin Philharmonic. He saw himself conducting the orchestra with finer skill than Furtwängler, creating a stunning impression. Arturo Toscanini yields the palm to him in the *Ring of the Nibelung*. Doctor Klebe becomes famous, outshining all the conductors in the world, and he is invited to Milan, to La Scala, then to New York, then—

The music stopped. Klebe pushed himself away from the balustrade and glanced at his wrist-watch: it was time to make the rounds. Clearing his throat, he mounted to the third floor and began with the major.

Like most Montenegrins, Major Pashich was tall and large-limbed, with the shoulders and chest of a grenadier. And his shortness of breath, his helplessness, his reluctance to climb out of bed, despite the doctors' advice to take more exercise, seemed ridiculous. He belonged to the type of patient who grows accustomed to the strict monotony of a regimen followed for many years and convinces himself once and for all that death is awaiting him outside the precincts of Davos. Every spring, as early as February,

he would start planning a trip to the south, to the Riviera or much nearer, to Locarno or Meran, for a respite from treatment and perhaps even a bit of philandering, but these restless dreams simply ended in a move to another sanatorium after a quarrel with the doctor in charge or with one of the patients. The major was forty, but in many respects he was like the gnomes of Wilhelm Busch, a book he sometimes thumbed through in bed, chuckling over the pictures and short verses.

He was lying in bed wearing a black silk skull-cap and sun-goggles with smoky-yellow glasses, because the sun was flooding his room, it faced the east, and he could not be bothered to stretch out his hand and pull a cord to turn the sheet of cardboard that served as a blind. This was the major's own invention.

"Good morning, Herr Major," said Doctor Klebe in a singsong voice.

"Good morning, Herr Doctor."

"Sleep well?"

"Thank you."

"Temperature?" the doctor glanced at the curve on the temperature sheet. "Fine! Will you be going for a walk?"

"I've got a headache," the major replied.

The doctor knew that some complaint was inevitable and asked in a different voice, mellow with solicitude, in a manner proclaiming his readiness to bring instant relief:

"Have you really? And at night as well?"
"Yes."
"I'll send you something."
"I've already got something for it."
"Pyramidon?"
"I've taken some."
The doctor fingered the cord attached to the cardboard. "Does it work?" he smiled.

"These things never break down," the major said with an answering smile.

"You're quite right. It's only what costs money that breaks down, especially when you haven't got any money. In Arktur now, there's something breaking every hour of the day. Karl is busy with repairs all day long."

"Yes, Karl has his hands full."

"You think so?" Klebe asked, turning to the window.

"I counted his duties recently. He's doing the work of nine people."

"You are joking, of course!" the doctor exclaimed, coughing loudly and laughing.

"I have it all written down here," the major said.

With slim white fingers he picked up pieces of paper from his bedside table, pushed his goggles up on to his forehead, under his skull-cap, put on *pince-nez* with narrow glasses, and read:

"Boots, porter, messenger, stoker, floor-polisher, yard-keeper, liftman, gardener, vege-

table-gardener, driver and mechanic. Even more than nine."

"You've forgotten to add that it is also Karl's duty to be polite and to smile," the doctor was piqued. "He can't be a driver when I have sold my car ages ago! And when I had my car I employed a man to look after the furnace. What does gardener mean? If Karl occasionally touches the edelweisses in my little Alpine garden which is no bigger than the usual bald spot on a man's head, it doesn't make him a gardener! And why a vegetable-gardener? It was Karl's own idea to grow salad in a hotbed."

"But you had this salad served at table," said the major meekly.

"I promised to pay Karl for his burdock which you call salad."

"You're compelled to call it salad, too, for otherwise it would appear that you were feeding your patients with burdock."

Doctor Klebe threw his arms out in supplication.

"My dear Herr Major! Why are you creating so many worries for yourself? It will not help you to recuperate. You must distract yourself from the realities around you."

"Were I a religious man—"

"What a pity! But why do you read so rarely, Herr Major?"

"Novels certainly won't make you live longer."

"True enough. Too many evil books are being written these days, it makes my blood boil sometimes. Imagine—"

The doctor sat down at the major's feet.

"Imagine, dear Herr Major. I chanced upon a little French book the other day, and I was shaken by what I read! It's about quite a respectable, wealthy gentleman and, you understand, he's living in sin with his servant! Shocking! She gets pregnant and he throws her out into the street. What do you think of it? I've never read a more licentious or foul book in all my life. I cannot understand what the author's object was. But I feel disgusted with myself for having plunged into such filth. No, thank you, from now on Edgar Wallace is all I'm going to read," said the doctor. He pulled a book out of his pocket and began to drum on it with his fingers, as if inviting the major to take a look.

The face of a happy man occupied most of the bright cover and between his energetic fingers was a cigarette in an extraordinarily long holder.

"It will keep you absorbed from the first page to the last. The French have nothing to beat it. It's fascinating and at the same time it dispels. . ."

"I should like to read," the major growled out.

"Edgar Wallace?" the doctor asked, livening up.

"Yes, that too. But first the novel . . . about the respectable and wealthy gentleman."

The major lowered the smoky goggles, hiding his eyes. For a second the doctor wavered—should he believe it or not?

"But it's a repulsive novel," he breathed out with a hiss, jumping off the bed and screening himself from the major with outstretched arms.

"I think, Herr Doctor, that it will not precipitate my death," the major protested mildly.

"For pity's sake, Herr Major!" Klebe said with both reproach and indignation, then took a business-like look at his watch. "I've chatted too long!"

He gave his patient an understanding nod.

"Very well, I'll send you this novel about a wealthy and respectable gentleman."

II

WHEN LEVSHIN'S strength began to return, it was not his mind nor his senses that made him realize it, but a novel instinct which surprised him. After long months in bed, he was taken out in a sleigh and driven over the first snow down the main street across the small town. Wrapped in a fur coat and rug, wearing felt boots and warm gloves, doll-like he reclined high up in the sleigh, almost level with the driver's seat. During this short ride he made numerous discoveries which filled him with delight. He discovered that the snow crunched under the runners, not simply, of course (that he knew since childhood), but with a crowded melody, a gay, even exultant tune that did not break off for a moment. He discovered that exhaust gas had a terribly funny smell, and he could not help laughing when a heavy red bus which overtook the sleigh with a deep growl discharged a thin stream of sweet yet stinking smoke from its exhaust.

An interest for everything grew in Levshin with fascinating and gladdening speed.

For a few minutes his attention was held by skiers keeping to the side of the road and letting the sleigh pass them. Flushed faces turned towards him and he drank in their frost-hardened smiles and the flashing glances of their dewy eyes as if they were draughts of ice-cold water. The skiers, boys and girls, were pupils of the sanatorium school. They raced on hatless, without gloves, wearing woollen clothes of different colours. A girl, fair hair hanging loose, with a long nose and gleaming teeth as white as the snow, waved to Levshin with her stick. He wanted to wave back, but while he was trying to pull his hand out from under the rug, the sleigh had caught up with another girl. He waved to her with a clumsy movement of his gloved hand but she pushed out her lips in childish scorn and turned away, while he laughed watching the swaying bodies of the skiers as they fell behind the sleigh and made their way uphill.

Everything he saw looked unexpectedly bright as though in the mountains, or "up on top," to use the local phrase, they had a special secret for colours. He saw a shop window filled entirely with scarlet azalias, and from the virgin white road it seemed to him that a blazing camp fire stretched out towards him with tongues of flame and then receded. At the entrance to a *café* he saw a figure of a bear shaped out of a lump of ice that breathed at him with a southern sea's

transparent greenness. There was a dazzling sun, the people were lightly clad, with neither hats nor fur coats, winter was a state of delight and Levshin's face, sprinkled with snow, was already growing warm.

When he returned home and Doctor Klebe in his white coat trotted out of the sanatorium, anxious to know whether Levshin had enjoyed the ride and if everything was well with him, while patients smiled and nodded to him from their balconies, Levshin suddenly wished that Doctor Stum had been there to see his solemn and somewhat amusing descent from the high sleigh. He looked up at the mountain: a solitary house was wedged into the green-black fringe of firs, and here and there a glossily smooth road glistened like glass through the forest. Levshin thought he might see Stum flying downhill on his sleigh, the way he liked to make his entry into the town, but the road was empty.

And then Levshin experienced a momentary and unexpected surge of tenderness for Stum and instantly realized that it was to Stum alone that he owed his rejuvenation, his life.

From that day on this new instinct, of which he became conscious, grew stronger day by day.

Lying on the balcony in a fur bag, strapped with belts, in an immobile position which no

longer tortured but brought him bliss, Levshin gazed at the smooth, blue sky, receding into imponderable heights, and then suddenly dropping in a blue slab right on the eyes the moment they started to swim from the cold.

He could see a cluster of dwarf poplars in the distance to the left, beyond a stone wall. He remembered all their various hues—from their frenzied green in the spring to autumn's jaundiced blaze. Every day, ever since school had started in the autumn, two girls used to stand beneath the poplars chatting for several minutes before parting to go home. Levshin came to know their habits, imagining that he could hear their meaningful, slightly secretive adolescent conversation. He knew what clothes they had and he could tell beforehand when one of the girls would rest a foot on the plinth of the wall and stand on one leg like a heron, when they would shake hands, swaying and pulling each other at parting. They were never still. Autumn leaves rained down upon them, the carpet of leaves which they worried with their feet grew thicker with every day. Then fewer leaves began to fall and the contour of a previously invisible house appeared through the branches. One day, as he was watching the two friends, Levshin read the story of a quarrel from the gestures they made. In their argument, the girls drew manifold designs in the air with their schoolbags. Now and then the bags bumped against one

another, stopping in their flight for a moment. Then the girls sat down on the plinth, putting their bags down on the side of the road. The argument was coming to an end and it seemed that the time to make peace was arriving. The last of the poplar leaves fluttered lazily down from the branches. The girls, now silent, were picking the leaves off the ground and slowly tearing them into shreds. Levshin went through these minutes of reflection and indecision together with the girls and was suddenly aware that they would never be able to make up their quarrel. Yes, there they were picking up their schoolbags and running in different directions without a backward glance. The autumn leaves were swept off the road, but the girls never appeared under the poplar-trees again. And only after the first snow-fall did Levshin see one of them again. She was with a schoolboy who was a little taller than she. They were standing on the same spot by the wall, changing their schoolbags shyly from one hand to the other, shovelling the fluffy snow with their feet and carefully stamping it into small slippery mounds. As always, without moving or raising his head, Levshin watched this first half-childish rendezvous, heeding to the warmth of his own happiness flowing through his veins. He neither wished nor could banish the smile from his cold face: it was fixed by the frost.

This interest in the countless little things

around, things that formerly were unnoticed or boring, turned the monotony of having to lie still, once frightening by its very name of "regimen," into something active and pleasant.

Before the first snow fell, construction was completed of a big house, a corner of which could be seen from the right side of the balcony. The Italian bricklayers, who had done the work, were paid off and in the evening came to the house. They started a song. Their voices were rich and gay and the song flowed into the mountains with so breathtaking a call that for the first time in six months Levshin forgot his regimen. Unstrapping his belts, he quickly got out of the bag and rushed to the balustrade. He leaned into the darkness. Four bricklayers were walking round the house they had built, swaying, their arms round each other. They had evidently drunk well of their native Chianti, their song was at once cheerful and sad, subsiding when they disappeared behind the building, then rising again when they came back into view. There was something solemn in this walking around the building, as though the workmen were making a vow to their labour and glorifying it in song.

Levshin started on hearing a constrained exclamation:

"What are you doing? Have you lost your mind?"

Doctor Hoffman, the assistant physician at Arktur, flew out of the lighted room in her white coat.

"Wait," said Levshin.

"Why did you get up? What happened?"

"Hush," he said again, raising his hand and nodding towards the partitions of the neighbouring balconies.

In silence they listened to the singing. With dogged perseverance, as though helping in the work, the song was engulfing the surrounding stillness. Growing louder and freer, the voices, blended indissolubly, as if born to sing together. The buildings, with lights twinkling on balconies and terraces, with scarcely noticeable or only assumptive shadows of motionless patients, looked like a raft floating stealthily along a black river.

"Anything like it?" asked the woman.

"Like what?"

"They remind you of your songs, don't they?"

Grey eyes, slightly protuberant, illumined by the light streaming in from the open door, gazed at him. It seemed that a shade of envy was added to the jealous solicitude which Levshin had already grown accustomed to seeing in these eyes.

"A little," he replied.

Recollecting herself, Doctor Hoffman said in a commanding tone of voice:

"That will be all. Go back at once. Do you hear me? Into the bag, this very minute!"

Levshin threw back the flaps of his bag, lined with black smelly goat's fur, and crawled into it. Doctor Hoffman began to strap the belts for him. She was frowning. A stethoscope, a percussion hammer and a fountain-pen of the latest make stuck out of the large breast pocket of her coat. Her hands slowed down a little in their work as she fumbled with his top shoulder straps and her warm fingers slid gently across Levshin's cheek.

"Fräulein Doctor, I have an extraordinary respect for you," he said.

"It's mutual, Herr Engineer."

"That stethoscope is very becoming. As a matter of fact I'm surprised that you don't always have a thermometer, a throat douche and, in general, some light, beautiful instrument in your pocket."

"Perhaps I should carry about a pair of scales for the patients?"

"No, but honestly, when you come in the mornings with that funny mirror on your forehead it makes you look so terribly important that it makes me feel small. Why didn't you choose to become a laryngologist?"

"Be good enough to lie still as usual. And no more nonsense. You ought to guard your health."

"Oh, but I do, Fräulein Doctor. You would

never believe how much," he said in a reverentially quiet voice.

He saw her biting her carmine lip as she turned and walked away, and he lay laughing for a long time, filling his lungs with the pure, frosty air, boundlessly satisfied with everything in the world.

III

ONE DAY, at noon, a new patient arrived. She came like a bolt from the blue and Doctor Klebe became flustered, afraid that she would disappear as suddenly as she had come. He invited her into the lift and on the way up to the third floor asked after her health. Her only complaint was fatigue. She had come from Hamburg and had stopped at Basle for the night. It was a long journey.

But the matter was hardly weariness alone; the doctor could tell that she was seriously ill.

"Are you troubled with a cough?" he asked solicitously.

"Sometimes," the patient replied, coughing as she said it.

Doctor Klebe also coughed.

He showed her the eastern room. The walls were yellow, with a bird design. There was a wash-stand with cold and hot water, oak-wood furniture, a big window. It was very cosy. But the newcomer gazed about her with dull

weariness and even hostility. Then the doctor suggested another room—a western room, a little smaller. Cheerful and simple, it was papered in blue with small flowers. Instead of a wash-stand there was a blue basin and a blue water jug on a low chest of drawers, the furniture was walnut, rather elegant, the doctor thought. The patient agreed with him but wanted to know where the balcony was. She would have to lie on a balcony, wouldn't she? The doctor admitted that that was so, adding that if the patient wished to have a balcony of her own, she would have to look over some of the southern rooms, which, by the way, were dearer than the rooms facing the east or west. But if the patient decided on this one, the price was very reasonable, she would have to use the common balcony on the ground floor, where, actually, it was even pleasanter because of the company of other patients.

Suddenly the newcomer said with an expression of complete indifference:

"I'll take this room."

"Will you please tell me your name?" the doctor said in his most courteous manner.

"Inga Krechmar."

"You have made a very wise choice, Fräulein Krechmar. I expect that you would like to have your bath immediately. I will show you the bathroom. There, by the side of the bed, is a bell: one ring for the maid, two for the messenger.

The messenger will come to you every morning and evening in case there's anything you might want in town. I must ask you to come down to dinner tonight in the dining-room. After dinner you shall have to go to bed, it's one of our customs. No, no, not for long. Two or three days . . . a mere trifle."

"May I see Doctor Stum? I have a letter for him."

"Certainly. Do you wish to be treated by Doctor Stum? He is our practising physician, a highly cultured gentleman. If you will allow me I shall pass the letter on to him."

"Isn't he at Arktur?"

"Of course, he is. He has many patients here. It's just that at the moment . . . he's away. Allow me —"

"There's something else," said the newcomer. "I have a cheque with me . . . I don't know how best to —"

"Is the cheque in marks?"

"In sterling."

"I should think the best thing would be —"

She opened her bag and he saw a small leather wallet, adorned with a view of some smart avenue, probably in Berlin, and a bluish cheque with "One hundred pounds sterling" spelled out in English.

"I think it would be best for me to ask a banker I know to send his agent to you, and you will have nothing to worry about: everything

will be done for you. And now I shall have your luggage sent up. Please be so good as to keep your clothes in the wardrobe. We keep all the suitcases in the attic. For the sake of hygiene, you know."

Doctor Klebe retreated with a low bow, waving his hand in a gesture of encouragement—with manly vigour but with no familiarity.

He ran down the stairs to the second floor and his excited coughing boomed in the stairwell like an explosion. He looked into the laboratory on his way.

"Are you finishing, Fräulein Doctor?"

"Yes, soon."

"Anything new?"

"The major has bacilli."

"Is that new?"

"There weren't any twice."

"An accident."

He looked at a stand holding little glass tubes filled with blood.

"Whose is this?"

"Levshin's."

"Well, how is it?"

"Good."

"I've always said that Stum was born under a lucky star. Do you remember what he said when he first examined Levshin? He said: miracles are still expected of Davos if they send such cases here. It made me think then: that's

some of your cunning! If a miracle does not happen you'll say that you knew at once the case was hopeless. But look how his luck has held even with a hopeless case!"

Klebe bent over the microscope, his face wrinkled up, and gave the adjusting screw a careless twist.

"Rotten eyepiece," he sighed, straightening up. "As soon as this curse is over, I shall redeem our big microscope and this old trumpet can go on the cupboard. I think that the worst is over and that we shall soon have patients."

He paused.

"Already today a young woman came to us. Oh, didn't you hear? Oh yes, a very, very nice young person, and I think that it's a bad case. As far as I can judge she is quite well off. She'll be coming down to dinner. Please go up and see her as soon as you are free. Your sympathy will be very good for her. A very nice young woman."

Klebe ran down to the ground floor, looking very much preoccupied. In the hall he came across the postman. A fiery-yellow envelope with the Arktur address on it blazed among the letters to patients. Doctor Klebe impatiently ripped it open with his thumb-nail. It was from an elderly Hungarian woman, a rich old patient of Arktur's, a cantankerous and capricious old lady who had quarrelled with Klebe over one

of her whims. She was now again in need of mountain treatment, she was willing to forget their quarrel and invited the doctor, rather condescendingly, to do the same. She wrote that she would be at Arktur within the next few days.

Klebe raced through the letter, then jerked his fountain-pen out of his vest pocket and, unscrewing the top, rushed to his office.

The major was in the front hall. He was wearing the complete armour of the cautious patient: dark glasses, scarf, high woollen boots with clasps, and walking-stick. Considering and calculating his movements, he was shaking himself free of snow, his breath coming in whistling gasps.

"How are you, Herr Major? You are looking fine today."

"And how are you, Herr Doctor?"

"Very busy. We have a new patient, a young woman."

"A young woman?"

"And a very nice one, too. By the way, I think you know Frau Rivash. She's well known for her millions. She once stayed here for a long time and is very much attached to Arktur. She's coming again. I must hurry along to reply to her letter."

He waved with the fiery-yellow envelope and pushed the door of his office open.

"Dear Frau Rivash," he began to write. "Any misunderstanding between us fades in the face

of my duty to safeguard your health. The best southern room at Arktur awaits you as from today."

No sooner had Klebe drafted these opening lines than his attention was arrested by the rattling, puffing and wailing of a motor. Turning to the window he saw a tiny two-seater stopping in the garden and two people—a man and a woman—climbing out, sharply bending their knees. Klebe knew at once that they were English and stopped writing.

The man, dark-eyed and tanned, with hair turning grey at the temples, returned Klebe's greeting in English with complete indifference as to whether the doctor understood him or not.

"At the moment there's no accommodation at the English sanatorium. I liked the location of your house. Have you got a good room? Let me see it. Where can I put my car? In your garage? Is it true that up on top driving is already suspended for the winter?"

Doctor Klebe answered all his questions in the affirmative with alacrity. The three made their way upstairs. Choosing a room, the man asked his companion what she thought of it and she said:

"It'll do."

They decided to move in that same evening and drove off at once, their noisy and stubborn motor leaving a thick trail of smoke.

Doctor Klebe sat down at his desk again but could not go on with his letter. Smoke flooded his vision, noises filled his brain. It was the beginning of an obviously different, long-awaited and, in all likelihood, beautiful life. Every room in Arktur would be occupied again. His debts would be settled and the administrators withdrawn. He would buy a new car and once again take a leisurely trip across Europe, from town to town, listening to music, meeting women, buying books. He would renew the equipment at Arktur, raise the charges, employ a bigger staff and take up scientific work: he had accumulated quite a store of data on the searing of pleuritic commissures, and apart from Stum there was no greater authority on this subject. And then he would take up music: get a teacher and devote two hours to the piano every evening.

Doctor Klebe returned his pen to his pocket and hurried out of his office. The patients were already gathering in the hall, awaiting an invitation to dinner.

Karl, his sleeves rolled up above his elbows and wearing a green baize apron, was striding towards the kitchen Klebe stopped him:

"Karl, I wish you wouldn't show yourself to the patients without your uniform."

"I understand, Herr Doctor, but I've just been oiling the lift," replied Karl, thrusting out his greasy hands.

"It doesn't make any difference. You are working in a first-class sanatorium."

"I understand, Herr Doctor," Karl repeated with a radiant smile as if he was being praised and not reprimanded.

Long, swift steps, curly hair, green eyes shining like the buttons on his uniform, a healthy colour in his cheeks and this indefatigable beaming smile made up the creature called Karl. It was this smile, this affability that nothing could destroy, that made Klebe nervous in moments of stress. But whenever things looked up, Karl was most appropriate. And now Klebe looked with pleasure at his straight and sturdy back and squared his own shoulders.

"Fräulein Doctor," said Klebe importantly, "I should advise you to work out a stricter timetable. One day a week should be assigned to blood tests, let us say Tuesday, for sedimentation and formula. Wednesday—for phlegm. Thursday—for all the other tests. And then Monday and Friday—quantitative phlegm analysis. Saturdays—general examination and weighing. If you follow this programme you'll have nothing but injections to do every day. I'll do the X-rays and also take care of the throat-douching, otherwise you won't be able to manage."

"But I have managed so far, haven't I, Herr Doctor?"

"I'm expecting quite a few patients," Klebe's words came like a draft of fresh air. "Will you be so good as to ask Fräulein Krechmar to come here."

Arktur's inmates were in a group in the hall when the new patient made her appearance. Doctor Klebe introduced her rather ceremoniously. There was a minute's silence. Everyone stared at Inga and she did not know what to say. Could all these people be really ill? She wondered. Some of them looked very fit with their weather-beaten, tanned faces. The major reminded her of a wrestler. But at the same time she found in him, as well as in all the others, something broken, something that she did not have, something that could never happen to her. She suddenly felt hot and wanted to go away because this silent scrutiny by her new friends was tactless, but at last one of them, an elegant, red-faced man of medium height, asked her:

"Is this your first visit to these mountains?"

"Yes."

"Will you be staying long?"

"The winter, probably."

"Oh, I see."

"Have you been here long?"

Everyone began to smile at her, like grown-ups do at a baby's prattle.

"What anniversary was it you celebrated the other day?" someone asked the major.

"The tenth," he replied and you could not tell whether he was in earnest or jesting.

"But *you* are the dean here," he turned to the elegant man with the red face.

"Yes, at times it seems to me that it had started in the nineteenth century. I've been here since before the war."

"Then you must like it here," said Inga, and everyone burst out laughing. A freckled-faced, mousy woman, the only woman among the patients, said with enjoyment:

"You'll like it here, too."

They all went on gazing at Inga. She was one of those fair-haired women, who blush for no particular reason and cover their confusion with a smile or a laugh. Levshin imagined that she cried easily and that the flutter of her heavy eyelids with their curling lashes was her means of defence. The skin on her forehead twitched, pulling up her eyebrows, and this gave her face an expression of timidity. The words of the mousy woman threw her into utter confusion.

"There are no standing rules, as otherwise everything would be much too simple," Levshin said suddenly. "Some stay here for a long time and others only for a spell."

"And you—have you been here long?" Inga put in quickly.

"Almost a year."

"Have you recovered?"

The patients stared at Levshin like a board of examiners.

"I am recovering," he answered firmly.

Just then the dinner gong sounded. They made their way into the dining-room, studying Inga with even greater thoroughness on the way.

IV

DOCTOR STUM was presiding over a Medical Association meeting at which a paper was read on new surgical methods in the treatment of bone tuberculosis. The meeting was held in the evening at the *kurhaus*, in a room above the restaurant from where the swaying music of a new dance, the rumba, floated up in barely audible strains. The speaker's observations were positive, particularly when he touched upon the influence of mountain air on surgical tuberculosis. When the speaker finished the floor was taken by one of the doctors; he praised the speaker and begged him to publish his paper and to stress, in particular, the benefit of mountain air, that is, the air at Davos, in the treatment of bone tuberculosis, which, as a matter of fact, was what the paper implied. The meeting grew animated. Everyone who took the floor lauded the speaker generously and admitted that the most important and central idea of the paper was to prove the exceptional importance of Davos in the treatment of bone tuberculosis.

At last a proposal was put forward to publish the paper in leaflet form for easier distribution by mail, and not restrict it to scientific periodicals. Of course, it needed the corresponding editing which would bring out the salubrity of the resorts in Davos, where the conditions made the surgical method of bone tuberculosis treatment really effective. It was this point that deserved particular notice in the speaker's outstanding work, for it was precisely this that explained its success.

Thus, a plane of understanding having been established, the matter became perfectly clear, and Doctor Stum closed the meeting after thanking his colleague for his interesting paper.

As the doctors left the meeting they made a mental note that the chairman had confined himself to calling the report "interesting," whereas all the others had been anxious to find something in it that would brighten up their business prospects at a time when the resort was experiencing so many difficulties.

Hearing of the paper, Doctor Klebe exclaimed:

"He was perfectly right. I, too, have always maintained that Davos is the best place in the world for curing bone tuberculosis. And you must also bear in mind that people with bone tuberculosis are the best patients. They stay in bed from morning till night, never getting up, and remain like that for a year, two years. . . . I am in perfect agreement with the speaker."

As for Doctor Stum, who considered the paper merely "interesting," Klebe just shrugged his shoulders. Doctor Stum liked to be different. He had, for instance, called the sanatorium physicians "a lot of money-boxes in coats and black hats." No wonder his colleagues hastened to take leave of him after the meeting was over and he was left alone as usual.

Stum was left alone. It was the hour of the evening when patients, who were allowed to stay on the balconies longer, would soon be turning in for the night. It was perfectly still, a full moon was rising up in the sky and snow crunched underfoot. Its scintillation was extraordinary: the crystals could be seen sparkling far down the road, in gardens and in the open courtyards. Doctor Stum bent over a snowdrift. Snow that had fallen in the morning lay as a cloak of gossamer, inviolably pure. Snowflakes, as large as thumb-nail, reflected the dazzling, rapid brilliance. Stum took some snowflakes in the palm of his hand. They twinkled for a moment, then grew dim and their lovely design vanished. Stum wiped his wet hand and took his hat off. And once again snow crunched underfoot.

On his way uphill Stum glanced back at the town sprawling in the valley. The houses dotting the slope were in perfect harmony with each other, in that their square balconies, illumined with orange-yellow lights, faced south and in the

twilight this combination of yellow squares told Stum where familiar sanatoria stood. His eyes found Arktur.

He remembered at once the new patient he had examined that morning. The moment he had taken the phonendoscope out of his ears, his memory still listening to the tones of her breathing, he had suddenly seen a resemblance between the patient and his dead wife. It was in the way the girl's sharp elbow had slipped under the narrow shoulder strap of her chemise, the way she immediately faced him, her eyebrows flying up inquisitively: what was the verdict, good or bad? And then her simple query: there's nothing especially wrong, is there? showed her utter scorn of any danger. How readily he, Stum, had succumbed to the plea concealed in this scorn to take things with a smile, as if it were his wife again begging the same, always the same: don't remind me, don't speak of my illness.

He had said:

"Shall we start on the repairs, Fräulein Krechmar?" and had given her his hand with a smile. "We'll see how you behave. Stay in bed for a while. I'll come and see you soon."

She shook his hand with pleasure, in a slightly masculine way, and with a toss of her hair, which had become disordered while she had been undressing, quickly walked out of the room.

"The case is clear enough," Stum said to his assistants.

The three of them had examined her simultaneously: Stum starting with her chest, Klebe with the right shoulder-blade and Doctor Hoffman with the left. They walked around her, replacing one another in every field of the thorax, and thus Stum was the first to complete the circle, then came Klebe and then, rather hurriedly, Doctor Hoffman.

Stum went up to the screen once more, switched on the light and looked at the X-ray. He drew his finger along the diffusive white spots, which were cavities, and said:

"A very good picture."

"A bit too sharp, perhaps," replied Klebe.

Stum was still seeing his wife.

When he had come to realize that nothing but drastic measures could save her, he had demanded her consent to an operation. She said that she would rather live only a little while longer than drag a mutilated body about for a few dreary years, and if he wanted her to leave him immediately, all he had to do was to mention the operation again. He never spoke of it again, never spoke of her illness, even when his wife would no longer leave her bed, and all he did was to ease her sufferings as much as he could. And all this time he had kept her slightly doped with increased doses of medicines which only served to dull the senses, and she had died with a narcotic blunting the pain. It seemed to Stum that he had precipitated the end, but he was

convinced that he could not have spared a patient more agony than he did in the case of his wife. He placed her death at his own door. With thousands of patients he had dealt according to what his experience suggested, subjugating their will to his. And among these thousands he had found her, she was his patient then, but stopped being one when she married him. There had been similar cases, "cases like hers" as he called them, undergoing treatment right there on the balconies of different sanatoria and Stum had been very successful with them with practically no misses. But her "case" proved to be beyond control, and as "a case" existed no more. Ever since the time he personally had made the unfavourable prediction, he had watched the course of her illness in minutest detail. But instead of overpowering her naïve and blissfully disdainful flippancy he gave in to it. She used to say to him: "You are my lover and not at all my doctor."

And because she appreciated every vital thing and always discovered something new in every phenomenon, Stum never drank so deeply of life as when she was with him. He lived in this state of sensual repletion until she died, and her death spelt the end of all life for him. Only a year later did Stum understand why he went on living when everything was over. He was saved by the irresistible sway of habit, experience and discipline of that very same doctor of medicine,

whom the two of them had purposely excluded from their life together. And in his ever present memories of his wife, all he had been through with her seemed as remote as that Christmas party, the first you had as a child, when you cannot be sure if you remember it yourself or only know of it from the reminiscences of others.

The letter brought by Inga was from a doctor Stum knew. He wrote that in his opinion it was possible to save this young, unbalanced, insufficiently serious but on the whole nice girl. He was particularly hopeful now that he was sending her to Stum and asked his gifted, respected colleague to make the patient see the need for discipline. To his own request he added that of Inga's father, an old friend of his, an engineer whom unemployment had forced into the thankless job of office clerk, and one prepared for any sacrifice for his daughter's sake.

A week later, when the first clinical observations enabled Stum to form a picture of the case, he called on Inga again in her room, papered in blue with a floral design, and again his strongest impression was the patient's desire to avoid the subject of her illness. And once more he succumbed to it and left the sanatorium upset and displeased.

Gazing down from the mountain at Arktur's snow-covered roof, Stum was thinking simultaneously of the paper read at the conference

and of Inga Krechmar, and to test himself he loudly repeated the basis of his convictions:

"Cure lies in the realization of danger."

He felt cold, put on his hat and strode uphill in a mountaineer's rolling gait.

His next call on Inga took place at an odd hour—before dinner on Sunday. Klebe ushered him into her room as if presenting Inga with a surprise gift that he had purposely been keeping for her, and, rubbing his hands with a smile, left them. Almost immediately after his departure a tray arrived with vermouth in tall blue glasses which looked like overturned bluebells. This was against all the rules and Stum said, "Let the sin fall on my head."

The transparency of the wine and the sparkling glasses lent gaiety to the small table at which, half reclining in bed, Inga was having her dinner.

"When am I going to get up, Doctor? You said I'd stay in bed for a few days, then it was another few days, and then a few more. And now it's three whole weeks and I am still in bed."

"You are quite right, three weeks is quite a long time," Stum said sternly, "but don't you see that your temperature hasn't come down?"

"I'm not asking for anything special. All I want is to get up a little. And then, why can't I go to the balcony?"

"There's one thing that I wanted to tell you

and I beg you to listen to me. But, first, let's have a drink."

He took a glass and clinked it against Inga's, coming up close to her bed.

"Not bad, eh?"

"No," Inga said, "but why is it bitter?"

"Is it? I shouldn't say so. It's the bouquet. But I don't know. That is, I do know, of course, it's what vermouth ought to be. D'you think—"

"I think wine should be tasty. But this smells of quinine."

"It's a good thing you don't like it, or you might make a habit of it."

"I should have liked to. I'd drink in the morning and at night and would always be in a sort of haze. Then all unpleasant thoughts would vanish as would all thoughts in general, well, wouldn't they?"

"So far as I know thoughts trouble the drunken mind more than they do the sober one."

"Oh I'd hate to be really drunk! Only a bit, to stop thinking."

"That's just what I was going to speak to you about. Not to think—that's very good. Or to put it better, not to think of bad things. Better still—to think optimistically, to think affirmatively. And that requires neither intoxication nor haziness but rather the contrary: clarity of thought or strength. Nothing else. I have been watching you, Fräulein Krechmar, and I can say with certainty now that you have

the necessary strength. I mean the necessary physical strength."

"I?"

"Yes, yes, you! Now, you have asked me if you may get up. Certainly you may!"

"I may?" Inga cried.

"Not so loud. Why these abrupt movements? Now then. Do you think you haven't the strength to get up, to move about or even to go for a walk?"

"But that is what I've been asking and asking all the time!"

"Well, yes, of course, you have the strength," Stum soothed her, "and the only problem is where to apply it. The problem is how best to economize and distribute your strength, but strength must be found."

"Is it as bad as that?" Inga asked suddenly in a low voice.

She blinked often, the skin on her high forehead twitched constantly, she buried her elbows in the pillows in an effort to sit up. Her collar-bones jutted out from under her white unbuttoned pyjama jacket. Stum poured himself another glass of vermouth.

"You said that wine ought to be tasty."

"I know what you're going to say," she interrupted in terrible haste. "A doctor ought to be honest, or something like that."

Stum drank slowly.

"No. It is not as bad as that," he said, punc-

tuating each word. "But you should know as much as possible of your condition, and naturally, it is my duty to be honest. You are in a condition where you must make use of every conceivable means of fighting your illness."

"Oh God! Forgive me, but you take so long. . . ."

Stum fidgeted clumsily in his chair.

"Don't scorn to draw upon any source you may have. Concentrate your strength. That means that getting up is definitely out. All the strength in you must be marshalled against your illness. And, moreover, the fight must be assisted by intervention which in your case I consider absolutely essential. To assist in the fight. Do you understand?"

"What?" Inga asked. "What is it called? Pneumathorax?"

"There you see, you know all about it. Yes, in your case I consider—"

"It's pumping air into a lung through a needle, isn't it?"

"Well, you know," he laughed, "pumping air into a lung is something that even we, medical men, cannot get away with!"

"Oh, I don't know! In short, you stick a needle into the side, right?"

"I'll explain it to you. The sick lung must be placed in a position where it would be under less strain. For this purpose we contract it, depriving it of some of the room that belongs to it. This is done painlessly, because the nor-

mal work of the lung, respiration, does, in fact, consist of contracting and expanding. That's its nature. For example, take a sponge—"

"Yes, very well, a sponge. But you are going to stick a needle into me? Yes or no?"

"Listen to me. What must we do to contract a lung? If we introduce some gas between the costal pleura and the pleura containing the lung—"

"But you introduce this gas of yours with a needle?"

Doctor Stum shrugged his shoulders.

"Fräulein Krechmar, you are at liberty to refuse the pneumathorax. No one is going to force you. I only wished to explain, to consult you on it."

"No, no. Thank you. Please go on, I listen," Inga said, lowering herself into her pillows.

"It's up to you to think the matter over and come to a decision."

"No, no. I just wanted to know if all this is very painful."

"I assure you," replied Stum coming up to her bed again, "there's nothing to be afraid of, nothing at all. I do this thing ten times a day, everything goes beautifully, people offer their sides to me with pleasure, and very often ask me to inject a little more air, even before they're due for it, because it makes them feel so much better."

"Does it mean that this thing, this needle business, has to be repeated many times?" she asked.

"More or less. It depends on the case. Please, Fräulein Krechmar, think it over and you and I will decide together when it's to be done. We shan't lose any time, of course, shall we? I think we'll do the right lung first, and then watch and see."

She raised herself up in bed, supporting herself by her hands.

"What do you mean—first? Do you want to do... to contract both my lungs?"

"You know very well, Fräulein Krechmar, that both your lungs are affected. And it is not yet quite clear to me in which the process is more advanced. But I should think if we begin with the right one—"

Inga began to cough. Spurts of wheezing and gurgling breath tore from her body, her narrow shoulders shook, and her neck disappeared entirely in the hollow of her collar-bones.

Stum took a spittoon off a little table, removed the lid and brought it up to her mouth.

"Spit," he said calmly. "You must spit. It's absolutely essential to spit properly, in earnest. You've got to learn to expectorate and spit, it's like the ABC."

But Inga could not catch her breath. Her eyes became enormous, the whites grew dim, and beads of perspiration stood out on her

lips and forehead. Stum placed a supporting hand under her shoulder-blades. At last, gradually she managed to retain the air in her chest, cleared her throat and fell back on her pillows, completely exhausted. Stum helped her down.

"Spit properly and everything will be fine," he said with displeasure. "And fear nothing. Look at the boys in the children's sanatorium—two-sided pneumathorax and they're playing football! And do you know, athletes envy them."

"When they packed me off," Inga's voice was hardly above a whisper, "they swore that it was wonderful here, such a climate that I'd feel like a new person. That you breathe so easily here! But what am I to breathe with if you contract both my lungs?"

"In order to live it is sufficient to have approximately one fifteenth of the lungs' surface," Stum spoke in a tone of admonishment.

"And in order to die?" Inga asked, and, dreading another paroxysm of coughing, laughed with her wet, blinking eyes alone.

"Now we've made a pact!" Stum cried jovially. "Congratulations! As a reward you have my permission to get up today. Yes! There's an international ski jumping championship on today. You'll be able to see it very well from the top of the east wing. I'll tell Klebe to show you."

Doctor Stum, in a sudden hurry to leave, shook her hot hand.

Inga lay without moving. The distinct pulse of the silence, which she had already come to recognize, grew muffled suddenly, as if blood had clotted in its veins. A horn's wistful call floated in through the open window: it was the mail going to nearby Klawadel. Three notes: from the bottom rung to the top, back to the bottom, then up to the middle—that was all the melody there was to it. For how many centuries now had it been floating sadly over the mountains? How many people had paused along the path to listen to its simple tune? How many hopes had it raised? How much grief had it brought? Was she, young, gay Inga, fated to listen to this melody every morning for a long time to come, for the rest of her life, perhaps? What a disappointment. The mail was going to Klawadel—she could not rid her hearing of either these words, or the horn's song. What was Klawadel? A health resort with pretentious hotels, a grim Retian village, or a handful of hostels with balconies, terraces, with windows and doors flung wide open, beyond which motionless patients awaited their doom? The mail was going to Klawadel. . . . Her father had not written for five days. He was working his fingers to the bone in order that Inga might lie here, "up on top," immobile. . . . Was it for long? A year, two, or longer?

Inga reached out to the bedside table. Her letters were in a drawer. She rummaged in the

drawer, finding a round metal compact. She opened it and brought the little mirror close up to her eyes. She scrutinized her eyelashes, eyebrows and nostrils, which seemed very beautiful to her, then let the powder puff play over her face. And in that very instant she began to cough. She sat up, trying to bend over as far as she could. Her compact slid to the floor and rolled away. Hunched up, Inga followed it with her eyes to know where to look for it afterwards. The attack grew. She remembered Doctor Stum and decided to learn to spit. She stretched for the spittoon. Sweat stood out in pin points through the powder on her forehead and around her mouth.

The song of the mail horn went on and on in her brain, and the word Klawadel came in syllables in time to her coughing.

V

ON THE STEEP MOUNTAIN slope there was a narrow, arrow-straight clearing. At the edge of the forest it terminated in a wooden chute, a long, snow-powdered arched path on tall piles. The slightly upturned end of the chute hung in the air high above a gentle slope.

From Arktur they could distinctly see the preparations for the championship: skiers were speeding along, following one another in a chain, spectators were taking their places on both sides of the chute, a brass band was trudging heavily through the snow. An ambulance, drawn by two fat horses, turned off the road, sank in the snow, then began to climb the hillside. The jumpers, skis on their shoulders, started uphill slowly, vanishing in the forest one minute and reappearing the next on the edge of the sheer clearing, snow-white in the midst of green-black firs.

All the patients at Arktur were by a window on the top floor, all except the English couple who possessed their national trait of detaching

themselves from the life of people among whom they lived. They were a preacher and his wife, who had come to relieve the Anglican minister who had gone home on leave. Pride would not permit the patients at Arktur to admit how insulting they found the English couple's attitude, and they treated them with the iciest politeness. But they mocked at the preacher and his wife behind their backs. For some reason everyone considered it shocking that they had arrived at the sanatorium in that ridiculous car of theirs, which now stood in the yard as its owner preferred to warm the motor up in the fresh air, rather than in Doctor Klebe's unheated garage.

This dock-tailed little car appeared on the road just before the tournament began. It was sighted right away and everyone's attention was drawn to it at once. And just then, in an effort to pass a sleigh carrying merry-makers, the car plunged wheel-high into the snow. The distant suburban road was too narrow.

"The clergy are stuck," said one of the patients.

Binoculars changed hands rapidly. No one thought of holding back their laughter, straining over each other's shoulders to see what was happening. But the greatest outburst of merriment came when the door of the car flew open and the preacher's angular knees, which had become a familiar sight to all, jutted out and a little later the haughty couple got out

and started rocking and pushing their anchored cabriolet.

"I say," said the major, replacing his *pince-nez* with spectacles, "hasn't it been forbidden to drive cars in the mountains for some time now?"

"The Herr Pastor has a special permit from the canton authorities," Doctor Klebe informed them tactfully in the hope of smoothing out the impression created by the general laughter. "Otherwise it would be hard for the Herr Pastor to perform his difficult duty."

"This tiresome manner of the English to always appear different in some way or other simply amazes me!" said the rich Hungarian woman. She had taken up the central position at the window. Her well-groomed grey head and her yellow face with wrinkles petrified by massages were immobile. Diamonds adorned her neck on which the skin hung like a piece of much washed linen. Her heavily ringed hands, with dazzling stones, reposed in her lap by her mother-of-pearl binoculars. Her remark about the English gave Doctor Klebe his cue.

"The English have something soulless in them altogether," he said.

The woman turned her glass-like heavy eyes upon him.

"It's better to have no soul at all than to have a double soul."

"Oh, how true!" cried Inga suddenly from the bottom of her heart.

"I always speak the truth," the Hungarian woman remarked without glancing at Inga.

Doctor Klebe glued his eyes to the binoculars. His short, pursed lips became bloodless, he was too obviously tormented, and the major, pitying him but not quite understanding what was going on, said sceptically:

"You can afford it, Madame."

"Afford what?" the Hungarian woman demanded.

"To speak the truth."

"I speak as any other honest person would," she replied.

"They're starting, look!" Klebe announced with relief.

It seemed to Levshin that he was actually on the other side of the window, studying the faces of the patients crowding within, as though they were in a theatre box. Inga had grown very thin since he had seen her last. In spite of her liveliness today, her mouth was compressed with fatigue. The major threw furtive glances at her from under his spectacles. Klebe offered her a comfortable seat in his most courteous manner and everyone asked after her health. The Hungarian woman alone remained indifferent, having long expended all the solicitude in her nature upon her own self.

"Look, look!" Klebe urged them in a worried voice.

A skier was standing perfectly still at the

top end of the clearing. Suddenly, he gave a little jump and, turning his skis along the length of the path, plunged down the steep slope like a stone, rocketed down the path, raced along the arch of the chute, tore away from it with a leap and flew into emptiness. He flapped his arms the way a large bird flaps its wings. He was nearing the ground, but the ground sped away from him in a sharp slope. He bent forward and kept on flying. People, standing on the slope on either side of the path, watched his flight with heads thrown back, hands clutching hats. And now the skier touched the path with his skis, flexed his knees, squatting low, and flying along the snow as though it had no surface. Finally, he turned sharply to stop his headlong flight. Snow dust whirled up like a screen from under his skis, and when it settled everyone saw that the man had not been able to hold his footing. His skis were swaying, crisscross, in the air above him, helplessly entangled.

"It takes so long!" Inga exclaimed while the skier was in the air, and when he fell it took all she had to suppress a scream.

"It happens sometimes," Klebe said, "but a skier must keep his feet. I'm surprised he fell after that perfect jump and when he was already braking. Something must have got in the way of his skis, a stone or a lump of ice. Well, let's watch them. To beat the world record they've

got to jump well over eighty metres. Can you see through the binoculars—they've posted up the results."

A second skier was hurtling downhill. He passed the chute, squatting low, straightened up at its very end and, throwing out his arms and balancing like a tight-rope walker, soared over the slope, composed and erect. The people below applauded, but as he landed he suddenly rolled like a ball to the foot of the mountain, where he got up with difficulty and shambled off the path, covered with snow from head to foot.

"He bent his knees too late to absorb the shock and came a cropper," Klebe explained.

The doctor, pleased that he knew more about ski-jumping than his patients, tried to be affable like a master of ceremonies, and the only person he was worried about was the Hungarian woman, who was staring out of the window with distaste. The competition thrilled him. For a fleeting moment he saw himself a skier soaring over the path, his powerful arms flapping and flapping and the path speeding away from him like an unattainable arrow shot by the sun. . . . There was a roaring in his legs, so clearly did he experience the jolt of landing, the whistling flight along the snow, the braking at the turning. His jump, of course, was fabulously long—a hundred metres, no more and no less. And already Doctor Klebe was being invited by the Scandinavians, he was on his way to Oslo, he was

jumping from the famous Holmenkolles, the wonderful mountain where many a world title changed hands. Doctor Klebe beats all the champions and everyone is astonished. And Doctor Klebe begins to see himself in every skier.

Two of the skiers kept on their feet but their jumps were short. The next jumped very far and his landing was beautiful to see. There was applause and he strode up to the judges with the graceful swing of an athlete. But after him every second man fell the moment he touched the ground. That did not alarm the spectators at all, and only made them laugh.

But one fall made everyone tremble with apprehension. The skier lost his balance while still in the air, flying head foremost, legs dangling behind him, and his skis no longer parallel with the mountain side but sweeping past at right angles to it. It was obvious that the man fell before he touched solid ground. He felt he was falling and painfully tried to straighten out, but that only worsened his position in regard to the ground, to which he was now turned sideways. Like a rock impelled by its own momentum, he hurtled on and on through the air until finally he was flung on the ground. He fell almost full on his back, first burying the point of one ski in the snow and smashing it to bits. He rolled downhill like a sack, and it was odd to see his elbows, knees and an absurdly long, black and intact ski spinning round his body. Some

of the spectators rushed to his side at once, then came the ambulance attendants, and the drowsy pair of fat horses which had to struggle hard before they succeeded in pulling the ambulance out of the snow.

Inga tore the binoculars from her eyes, thrust them into the hands of her neighbour, took them back and again raised them to her eyes.

"He's hurt," she muttered.

"Unfortunately, that happens sometimes," Klebe said.

"He's badly hurt, he's dead!" she cried.

"People with nerves like that should keep to their rooms," the Hungarian woman said quietly.

"But can't you see for yourself—they're carrying him!"

"That's the risk he took," said the Hungarian woman in a louder voice.

"Perhaps he's only fainted?" said the major.

"Yes, the most probable thing is that he's simply bruised," Klebe agreed. "Fatal accidents are hardly possible here. At least I don't recall any. Limb fracture—that goes without saying. Look, there's another skier already speeding down!"

Inga wept. Pressing her lips tightly together, she tried to keep a hold on herself, not to start coughing and not to sob. She wiped the tears from her cheeks with an upward motion of her index finger and took the compact out of her

handbag. She was afraid to look out of the window.

Levshin was the first to notice her tears.

"Would you like me to take you to your room?" he asked her in a voice she alone could hear.

"No, oh no!"

She covered her face with the palm of her hand and sobbed—she could not keep back the long-drawn pain that had accumulated within her.

"My dear Fräulein Krechmar," Doctor Klebe said, "I was not mistaken in your gentleness. I understand your anxiety only too well. But there's really no reason for it. Nothing worth your concern has happened. Athletes mend as quickly as lizards, I assure you. For instance, when the Canadians play ice hockey, one man breaks another's head with his stick, and before you know it the chap with the broken head is back on the ice with a bit of plaster stuck on his wound. His game is only the fiercer for it. But of course these people are not like you or I. Come, let us go and find a little distraction."

"No, no!"

The patients crowded round Inga, each trying to show greater solicitude, but she kept repeating, "No, no." Her sobs started to break off into coughing.

"After all, I don't see why all the others should be ignored," the Hungarian woman said, rising and moving back her chair.

Doctor Klebe began to shake his head worriedly and went so far as to touch Inga's elbow. She jerked her arm away. He glanced at the Hungarian woman and her pose told him that she demanded resolute intervention.

"Fräulein Doctor," he addressed his assistant, "please take our dear Fräulein Krechmar up to her room."

"No, no, thank you, don't!"

Inga turned to Levshin.

"Would ... would you?" and raised her elbow a little.

They passed through the corridor along the polished, creaking floor boards, descended a flight of stairs, walked along another corridor, all in unbroken silence. In her room Inga went up to the mirror. Levshin stood aside and watched her. Gradually, she grew calmer and only rare sobs broke through from deep down within her. He found her slimness attractive, but the skin on her face and hands wore a peculiar colour of fatigue, sallow with unexpected shadows of blue, which, he remembered, used to appear round his own lips and finger-nails.

"Turn around. Why are you staring at me?"

He turned away to the window but soon faced her again, imperturbably watching to the end how meticulously she destroyed all trace of tears on her face.

"Do you think I cried because I was sorry for that poor skier?"

"It might have been that you were sorry for yourself."

"What makes you think so?"

She looked at him, her eyebrows jerking.

"I want to lie down."

Before she got to the sofa she said:

"They will ... they'll contract both my lungs!"

Tears flooded her eyes with terrific speed as if she had not just stopped weeping.

"Do you think I should agree to it?"

He laughed, making a step towards her and watching in amazement the queerly dancing skin on her forehead.

"Listen to me, it's a trifling matter, there's no need for hesitation at all."

She recoiled from him.

"You've lost your mind."

She stretched out on the sofa and lay there silently. Levshin's hands hung just a little above her face and she examined them. She had had a fleeting glimpse of these hands once before, in the dining-room, on the day of her arrival. Levshin had been sitting at the next table and then the branching, swollen veins on his tanned wrists had looked greenish and hard. She had wondered at the time if it was his illness that made his veins swell up so, and she had wanted to feel them. Now the veins on these hands were almost blue and probably warm, you could feel they were soft by simply looking at them. There was a certain strength

in the hands, rather a physician's strength, probably doctor's hands like these inflicted pain.

"D'you mean that you think I ought to agree?"

"If Stum considers in necessary, agree by all means!"

A whole minute went by in silence.

"Do you know Klawadel?" she asked.

"It's a small place near here, beyond the mountain."

"Have you ever been there?"

"No, but you can hear the mail going there."

"Yes. The horn."

"It's an automobile horn."

She gave him a startled, wide-eyed look, as though protecting herself from him with her long, curling eyelashes. He continued gazing at her eyebrows and forehead in surprise.

"I wonder what it's like there."

"Where?"

"In Klawadel."

"Yes, really."

"Really what?"

"Really interesting to know," he said and was suddenly aware of the disturbing senselessness of their conversation.

Then Inga asked:

"May I touch the veins on your hands?"

VI

EVERY DAY, before breakfast, the Greek poked his dark brown face into Levshin's room. Teeth bared in a smile, the little man would whisper timidly in a fantastic Russian dialect:

"Good morning, sir. I only wanted to know how you were feeling."

But in point of fact this was not all he wanted to know. He carried a bottle of eau-de-Cologne, a razor and a pair of clippers in his small, pot-bellied suitcase, and some cakes of soap, carefully wrapped in paper, in his pockets. He shaved bed-ridden patients in their beds, expertly shaking up and adjusting their pillows. On the sly, he dealt in perfumery. His little hairdressing establishment, snuggling on the edge of the town, was patronized only by neighbours, and if he didn't scurry in and out of sanatoria with stuffed pockets, he would have been unable to support his three small children, who were as dark-brown as himself.

He usually left his overcoat in the hall, but would take his cap upstairs with him and put it on top of his little suitcase. It was a unique cap. There wasn't another like it in the world: it was like a physical map, the bald leather spots, which had turned blue, representing seas, and the patches of reddish-brown sealskin saved from falling by the grease that had accumulated over long years—islands.

"It's thirty-three years old, this cap is," the Greek would whisper. "It mustn't be lost, it comes from Moscow!"

He would clap his hand over his mouth, glance at the door and, with a grimace of suffering, give a long: "Sh-h-h!"

"Have you been to Moscow?"

The Greek would then switch over to a fantastic Franco-German dialect.

"Yes, before I left Russia I was a hairdresser for a short while in Moscow." He imitated barber scissors with his hands. "Ooh-ooh! Cold!" He blew into his tightly clenched fists. "Fires burning in the streets!"

"Log fires?"

"Yes. And a policeman. A huge policeman!"

He skipped from one foot to the other, stretching his arm up as if trying to reach for the huge policeman's cap.

"It must have been a long time ago."

"Thirty-three years ago."

He would quickly clap his hand over his mouth again.

"What is Moscow like now? Sh-h-h!" he hissed, rolling his eyes in terror.

He would listen to Levshin with bated breath, his hand pressing against his heart. What he heard contained much that was mysteriously attractive, and the picture of old Moscow with its blazing log fires merged in his imagination with all the beauty that he had ever seen in his life: with Abastuman, where in his youth he had learned to shave and dress hair; with Trabzon where he had gone to fetch his bride, who had been faithfully waiting for many years; with the hot soil of Greece where he still dreamed of planting a garden for his little ones; with the little ones themselves and the lacquer-black eyes in their smooth little faces. He pressed his beloved cap to his breast and whispered with exalted trepidation:

"Ah, that was a beautiful description of what Moscow is like now! Sh-h-h!"

He would end his call with a heartfelt incantation:

"The great thing, sir, is that you are feeling well!"

The next arrival would be Karl. Levshin had seen Karl's face countless times, but every time it puzzled him: was its perpetual radiance simply a function of cloudless health, or was it a reflection of the spirit's exultant triumph?

Karl's arrival could only be compared to the lighting up of the leading planet in the magnificent system of heavenly bodies.

"Good morning, Herr Levshin," Karl would say. Uttered by Karl, this commonplace greeting sounded as if this was the moment he had been dreaming of since childhood and now considered it to be the greatest one in his life.

"Is there anything you would like me to do for you?" he would ask.

Happy to oblige, he would make a note in his writing-pad, repeating the words:

"Five 30-centime stamps. A tube of 'Chlorodont,' one franc. A bar of bitter chocolate, 80 centimes."

Everything that was said to him made him happy. If he brought in the mail he would announce in tones of congratulation:

"It's from Moscow."

And, grateful, he would depart, although it was he who had earned gratitude from others.

Half an hour later Doctor Klebe would come in. He would croon his set phrases—Did you sleep well? Temperature?—and then unhurriedly feel about for a subject of conversation, one not too vital in the interests of health.

On this particular morning he was upset and although he tried to perform his ritual, he messed it up and it was obvious that he

could not decide whether to tell Levshin of his troubles or not.

Pulling out an Edgar Wallace novel from his pocket and carelessly waving with the book, which had the author's photograph on the cover, he said:

"Of course he's no Dostoyevsky or Lev Tolstoi. It would never enter anyone's head to compare them at all!"

He clutched his head in his hands, the head into which such a comparison could never enter.

"One look at this massive, unintellectual face with the cigarette is enough! I have no regard for him at all, but I keep his books for my patients. You will agree that I can't suggest Dostoyevsky to anyone wishing to relax and fall quietly asleep over a book. And then, my dear Herr Levshin! In the old days a reader was most interested to learn of reality through novels because he had no notion of reality at all. But now it has swallowed us up entirely and we are glad when a novel tells us something we can hardly believe. Books by a serious author demand reflection. That is the way they are written. And it's a strain. Readers want to be like a theatre audience for whom all problems have been solved."

Klebe folded his hands behind his back.

"We are too often called upon to witness warped and amoral psychics in this life of ours

to make any additional study of the soul's deformities in novels."

He bent towards Levshin and whispered:

"There's an example for you close at hand: your neighbour. No, not that one, this one here," he pointed to the balcony partition. "I thought that such characters could only be found in psychological novels. But, good God, how wrong I was!"

"I can't hear you very well," said Levshin loudly.

"La-la-la-la," sang the doctor, imitating the Klawadel mail horn, and with a cough sprang away and peered round the partition at the neighbouring balcony.

"She's out. She has evolved a regimen of her own: goes out for a walk when she ought to be in bed. What gives her the right to do so? Can it be her wealth?"

The doctor's eyes bulged.

"What will the patients think? The rich can do as they please at Doctor Klebe's! Eh?"

"And will they be wrong?"

"But you do know what a stickler I am for discipline."

"Then tell the lady to leave Arktur."

"That is exactly what I told her. 'Madame Rivash,' I said, 'you shall have to part with Arktur if to the detriment of your health you do not abide by the rules prescribed by medicine.'"

"Quite a dignified speech."

"Yes, that is what I said. Or, rather, I said: Arktur will have to part with you."

"That's just as good."

"But think a moment. Madame Rivash has diabetes besides tuberculosis. She criticizes my kitchen. But she is only permitted one dish out of any ten you might think of. I keep telling her: 'Madame Rivash, I am doing everything I can for you, but why don't you invite a professional dietetic cook if you're dissatisfied?' She said she wouldn't object if the expense was borne by Arktur. I only shrugged my shoulders. There is a limit to everything! Do you know Tokay wine, Herr Levshin, genuine Hungarian Tokay? Well then, this Madame Rivash is the owner of all the vineyards in Tokay! She is a multimillionairess! Neither you nor I know what a multimillionairess means. I don't even understand what a million means! And she permits herself a mocking tone when she speaks to some Doctor Klebe! She receives him in her room with her naked arms flung behind her head. She ridicules poor Arktur, which, no matter what she thinks, is preserving her health. 'You are charging me the highest prices,' she tells me, and adds, 'for the money I'm paying I have a right to demand anything I wish.' I shrugged. I shrugged my shoulders again, Herr Levshin, what else could I do? And then she goes on to say: 'I have a right to demand anything I want including your nerves, Herr Doctor.' I replied

that my nerves were not mentioned in Arktur's prospectus nor were they indicated for diabetes. She said that after this piece of rudeness she would be compelled to leave Arktur for the second and last time."

"So it was Madame Rivash who said she'd leave?"

"No, I beg your pardon. She called my words rude. I was quite willing to admit that they were uncivil, but I—"

Klebe peeped round the partition again. Straightening up, he threw his coat open, and challenge flashed in his carriage like the blaze of a match. He thrust his hands into his trouser pockets. His chin jutted out.

"But I did not beg her pardon," he said. "On the contrary. I said: Madame, no matter what your stay means to Arktur, your health means much more, and to preserve it—"

Klebe swallowed a chestful of air and, facing Madame Rivash's balcony, continued:

"Arktur will have to part with you, Madame!"

He sat down on the edge of a *chaise-longue* and rested his elbows on his knees. His back became rounded, his chin disappeared into his coat collar, and he spoke meekly:

"It's madness to own a sanatorium! It was a cursed hour when I decided to buy one!"

"But business wasn't bad then, was it?" asked Levshin.

"Few people take such a sincere interest

in another's predicament as you do," said Klebe, apparently missing the irony. "Business was very good then, that's true. I bought a new car every year. My friends came and stayed at Arktur to have a good time and a bit of winter sport. I was able to say that I was living! But to own something that doesn't belong to you! That's how the matter stands now. I know now the fickle nature of ownership."

"If it weren't for the fickleness—"

"No!" Klebe exclaimed. "My bones are groaning under the weight of these fetters. And how often I thought of Moscow which has a cure for this terrible disease!"

"But is not your disease of your own making?"

"You wish to switch roles, your question sounds like a doctor's."

"Is it too solicitous?"

"No, it's too unbiassed. But here you are, my property has become a burden to me because I am forced to own it. I am an Austrian, you know. Foreign doctors are not permitted to practise in Switzerland. The only right my degree gives is to be addressed as 'Herr Doctor.' It's not the same thing as remuneration. An experienced medical practitioner like me has to stand up with his mouth plugged up in front of any Swiss youth just out of the university. On the other hand, I am given the right to own property when it brings nothing but losses."

"Not only losses, surely."

With a hurt look at Levshin, Klebe got up from the *chaise-longue*.

"You are smiling, Herr Engineer," he said. "My creditors make me sick with their spying. Twenty pairs of eyes watch every franc that I put in my pocket. I am an honest man and I pay my debts, but because I am honest I shall not enter into any deals with my conscience. I hold the reputation of my establishment above all else, and I shall not have it stained even if I have to live on nothing but potatoes."

Klebe began to button up his coat vigorously, and in that same moment there came the sound of a scale drummed woodenly on the piano, repeated time and again without a stop. It came from the open window on the first floor and in a flash it went all round the balconies and the whole building.

"The major," Levshin said.

"The major," Klebe said.

Tara-tara-am, the major played, tara-tara-am. It was the daily exercise for his right hand, which had been injured by calcium injections, and he went through the exercise religiously, forcing all the people at Arktur to listen to his playing for fifteen minutes every day.

Klebe sped to the sitting-room. He found the major leaning against the music stand, his left hand supporting his head lightly, his eyes

musing upon a spring landscape on the wall. And even after Klebe had come right up to the piano, the major's right hand went on with its work.

"I beg your pardon, Herr Major, but this is the hour when you ought to be lying in bed on the balcony."

Tara-tara-am—the major reached the end of the scale and paused.

"My playing, Herr Doctor, gives me no pleasure. But I have to sacrifice my own hearing in order to right the injury you caused me."

He uttered all this with unusual calmness and then immediately played the scale down again—tara-tara-am. And thus he carried on the conversation, only pausing in his drumming to put in a remark.

"Yes, that unfortunate incident with the injections, which occurred through no fault of mine, but of the Fräulein Doctor's," Klebe said to the accompaniment of the music. "I have grieved over it with you on more than one occasion, and I am deeply gratified now that your fingers have already developed such enviable dexterity. Once again I must advise you to continue with this wholesome exercise, but, as we have agreed before, you shall in future carry out this exercise before your evening walk."

"Or before the morning one."

"But not at an hour when you should be resting."

"Perhaps I needn't rest at all?"

"We know of no other means of treatment."

"Then perhaps I should give up treatment?"

"If you value your health—"

"I do value my health and that is why I exercise the fingers that were crippled for me at Arktur."

"But I beg you to consider the routine of this house. This music is annoying not only to you but to the other patients as well. Madame Rivash has more than once expressed her surprise to me."

"Ah, I see that Madame Rivash means more to you—"

"On the contrary, Herr Major, especially since the madame is leaving us anyway," Klebe hastened to say.

But it was too late. The Major got up and standing in front of the piano drummed through the scale, striking a mighty last note with his thumb and holding the key down. Tara-tara-do-o. Without releasing the key, he stated to the humming of the whetted strings:

"I don't care if anyone is leaving you. I shall leave in any case."

There was only one exit from the sitting-room and, after a second's hesitation, in which they measured each other with irate looks, they both made for it. However, owing to his corpulence the major fell back, while the doctor dashed through the door and ran to his study.

He threw himself on the sofa. For something like five minutes he lay with closed eyes and legs stretched out. A fit of coughing seized him and his body was thrown up and down on the springs of the sofa. Then he grew quiet. Rising a little, he turned on the radio. The announcer was reading Central-European weather forecasts in the voice of a screen-lover. Klebe pulled out the cord and closed his eyes again.

All the sounds reaching his consciousness came from the street: a bus horn, sleigh bells. The sanatorium was silent and Klebe fancied that all the furniture had been carried out long, long ago and the walls stripped for repapering. Klebe was terrified. In his mind's eye he clearly saw Arktur's corridors from which the red carpeting, cleaned by Karl, had disappeared. Now he was rushing from floor to floor, from room to room but there was a hollow emptiness everywhere. The wallpaper—the yellow paper with the bird design and the blue paper with the little flowers—was hanging down in shreds. The air was filled with the stench of formalin. There was complete silence.

Klebe jumped up from the sofa and looked out of the balcony door. His patients were lying in *chaises-longues* on the balcony. There were only a few of them, and the *chaises-longues* stood far apart.

He came to a sudden decision and rushed upstairs. Thank God the carpeting was there

and no one had ripped off the wallpaper. When he knocked and entered Inga's room, he found her staring at the ceiling. Her arms lay stretched on top of the blanket in accordance with the rules of medicine which had been instilled into her.

Completing his round of morning questions hastily, he sang out in tones of such sincerity it almost sounded like a musical box:

"My dear Fräulein Krechmar! Please do not consider it an impertinence on my part, but there is a proposal I'd like to make. I should like to move you into the southern room, the beautiful southern room. It will not cost you a franc more than you are paying now, but it will be so very much better for you there, so much more comfortable with the balcony. Of course you know that you'll soon be spending your days out-of-doors for you are now sufficiently acclimatized. We shall move you today!"

"I don't understand. Aren't those rooms more expensive, Herr Doctor?"

"But I have just told you that that will not concern you at all. You must believe me when I say that we all want to make you comfortable, as comfortable as possible, and to see your health restored. You have made such an impression on us; you have conquered our hearts. I shall be most happy if you will agree to my proposal. You agree, I see it, you agree! I shall give the orders right away to put everything in readiness!"

Klebe backed out of the room with gestures of gratitude and reassurance. He bowed his way out into the corridor. Something icy seemed to drop to the pit of his stomach: it was his anguished pride, he thought, but he could not help it now and no power on earth would make him go to Madame Rivash. He could not and he did not want to let himself be humiliated. He was not one of those people who attained their ends by unworthy means. No, Doctor Klebe could not go to Madame Rivash! That was all there was to it!

What about the major? Yes, perhaps he should go to the major. The man was hot-tempered but he soon cooled off. In a way he belonged here, he had drunk too long of the air of this town, had marched obediently down the corridors in the sanatoria, passing through the rooms and balconies—a frightened soldier of fate. The mutinies he staged from time to time left no ripple on the surface. All in all, he was a good chap.

And yet he made no sign when he heard Klebe's voice and with his cruel silence compelled the doctor to repeat humbly:

"We lost our tempers, Herr Major, please—"

"You lost your temper," the major replied after a lengthy pause. "You are a doctor and cannot afford to lose your temper."

"A doctor," said Doctor Klebe in a dispirited voice, standing in the doorway like a suppliant.

He groped for a chair like a very old man and almost fell into it, hunched up, hands clutched to his breast in an effort to suppress a rising paroxysm of coughing.

The major did not turn round. Through his dark glasses he stared pitilessly out of the window at the motionless and dazzling snow on the mountain.

"A doctor," repeated Klebe, regaining his poise. "You ought to have acquired vision during your stay in these mountains, Herr Major, I mean to say an ability to see. And most probably you do suspect that I am not quite well. Well then, you're right, at times I call it the distention of my aorta, at others bronchitis. But what does it matter what I call it, it's only for my patients' sake. You can be sure that I'll not tell them that I am suffering from the same disease as they, and that the only thing I learnt during my ten years 'up on top' was to dread moving down below. You know the feeling I mean. I should be receiving the same treatment as you, only, maybe, a little less. And forgive my mentioning it, but I am not getting a pension. That explains the Noah's Ark in which both you and I, Herr Major, are sailing. It will sink to the bottom if its crew and passengers desert it. Do not leave your cabin, Herr Major. I am speaking with you as with a gentleman."

Doctor Klebe's eyelids turned red, he made

his apologies haughtily, an odd, contemptuous smile twisted his lips. He rose from his chair with difficulty and stood with bowed head.

"Very well," said the major without turning away from the window, "I shall stay for the time being."

VII

NGA LAY flat on her back. It hurt and frightened her to turn. A hollow, resilient ball seemed to roll in her side whenever she tried to change her position the least bit. She was afraid this ball would roll over and squash her heart or her throat and smother her.

Looking askance at Doctor Stum, she said breathing carefully:

"And then that puncturing began, a second, a third time, and all in one and the same place. It was terrible! I'm not going to let you do it again. I shan't let you torture me. You can't spread your rules to everyone. I'm an exception, not a rule. It hurts. You said I'd be playing football, and instead of that I can't even leave my bed. Do you know the name for it? Caddishness!"

Not to use up the whole supply of her irritation, she turned her face away from Stum.

"Your colleague wrote to you in plain words," she said to the wall, "you have no right! I'll run away."

She glanced at Stum stealthily. His face was grave. He was listening to her thoughtfully, not the way he would to a child or even a patient, with a keen desire to appreciate her arguments.

"We cannot stop the pneumathorax now," he said. "There was gas today. I introduced fifty cubic centimetres. We must continue. I hope we can manage without searing the commissures."

"They told me so many nice things about you," Inga said in a slightly gentler tone.

"We'll do it again in the evening," he smiled.

"Darling," her voice implored him, "I love you so much! I love you so very much! I love you whatever way you wish it. How do you wish it?" she asked very quietly. "Do you wish it?"

She raised her hand apprehensively and stretched it out to him.

"But there's just one thing I want—please, please don't puncture me again!"

He stroked her wrist. Damn it, how she reminded him of his wife! When she screwed up her eyes and the painted rim of her eyelashes glistened with tear-drops, he felt that he would lean over and press his cheek to her face. But instead, he said instructively:

"There is only one way to fight tuberculosis: trench war. The patient must dig himself in and gradually narrow the circle around the enemy. Step by step."

"Oh, but no one knows how wars should be fought. Otherwise they would never be lost. And you, a Swiss, have never even fought in a war."

"We held our positions in the mountains all through the world war," Stum objected. He straightened up and the corners of his mouth curled down as if he were hurt.

"No, you are no soldier."

"That's something to be decided on the battlefield."

He looked genuinely touched to the quick. Another minute and he would start on Wilhelm Tell. She laughed—soundlessly—to prevent herself from coughing.

"We don't need a battlefield. Anyone can see that you are good-natured."

Her smile suddenly vanished.

"I shall get well, shan't I?"

"I don't doubt it."

"All right then. I trust you."

Their parting was unexpectedly cheerful, and at once everything appeared pleasant and clear to her. For several moments she thought of Stum with delight. He didn't look like a doctor at all. His hands? Yes, his hands did a little, maybe. Levshin's hands were more like a doctor's. And then he wasn't as easily embarrassed as Stum. It was awfully funny the way Stum turned his eyes away! Was he in love? Levshin was definitely not.

Inga got out her little mirror. But she found no pleasure in studying her face. She had been losing more weight lately and the powder only emphasized the lifeless sallowness of her skin.

Karl came in. He easily rolled the bed with Inga in it out to the balcony, lifting up the soundless wheels over the threshold. Inga purposely made him move her bed to the left, then to the right, a little forward, then back again: she enjoyed looking at Karl's beaming, ruddy face.

After he had bowed himself out, Inga began to listen to the sounds of life on the other balconies, closing her eyes, then raising her eyelids slowly and blinking through her lashes at the sparkling snow-clad mountains. She could hear coughing and the snapping of spittoon lids. There was a barely distinguishable crackle of languidly turned pages.

A newspaper was rustling on the terrace below.

Suddenly she heard Doctor Hoffman coming out to Levshin on the next balcony. There was no mistaking the tapping of her high heels. She sat down on the *chaise-longue* which creaked beneath her weight. "Makes herself quite at home," Inga thought vexedly.

"What happened?" Levshin asked.

"It's terrible!"

She was breathing rapidly. She must have been running up the stairs.

"Do you know . . . the new patient, I told you about him . . . a boy of nineteen. I examined his phlegm today. I left the laboratory for a minute and when I came back I found Klebe at the microscope. 'Well,' he said, 'have you found any bacilli in the young man's phlegm?' 'No,' I answered, 'I did not.' 'Whose preparation have you got under the glass? His?' 'Yes, it's his.' 'Well, I've just found a couple of bacilli in it,' he said, 'you needn't look further.' I could not protest. The minute he left the lab I rushed to the microscope and started looking again. I found nothing. It's a good thing some material was left over. I made another preparation, put it under the microscope and again discovered nothing. An hour later Klebe reappeared and I told him that I couldn't find any bacilli. The test results were negative and there were definitely no bacilli. And do you know what he said? 'I told you not to waste your time on this rigmarole. Nothing will be altered now, anyway. I have told the young man that unfortunately bacilli had been found.'"

Every word they said reached Inga in smothered tones as if they were being pushed into her ears intentionally.

A *chaise-longue* creaked sharply—Levshin had raised himself up on his elbows.

"What if the truth leaks out?" he said quietly.

"But how could it?" asked Doctor Hoffman. "Who can prove that Klebe didn't see the bacilli?"

"But if you tell the patient about it —"

"That Klebe had lied? On whose assertion?"

"Then do the tests over again."

"Good Lord, of course I will, but the point is that by now the patient is certain that he's got active pulmonary tuberculosis. He's branded!"

"But are you quite certain that Klebe lied?"

"Yes."

"Then you are conniving in the lie with him."

The woman darted across the balcony.

"What's the use of my confiding in you?"

"None at all. You'd much better confide in Klebe."

"He knows perfectly well that I didn't believe him. But he'll never admit it, never. He'll simply discharge me."

"Would you be sorry to leave him?"

"I hate him," she said through clenched teeth, "but you see —"

"Yes, yes, I understand. He's paying you a salary which is a third of what Karl gets, and then you tell me he is also six months behind —"

"Yes, but," she broke in, lowering her voice to a whisper, "is it to be street for me then?"

"You've got to find another job. Talk to Stum about it. All right, I'll talk to him. Do you want me to? He's a decent sort."

"Stop it! Perhaps in your country, in Moscow, people are given jobs out of decency or something of the sort. Stum is Swiss and the law

binds him to employ only Swiss. I am a foreigner like Klebe. Do you think he does not realize that I have nowhere else to go?"

"He'll discharge you anyway if the remaining patients run away."

"Of course. That is why it is in my own interests to see that the patients do not run away. Therefore I've got to do what Doctor Klebe is doing . . . and . . . I see now that I shouldn't have told you all this."

The speakers relapsed into silence. It struck Inga with sudden amazement that she had not coughed for quite some time now. The thought that a fit of coughing might start terrified her, and indeed, there it was now, creeping up her throat, tickling and scratching, and the only way to breathe now was to draw in the air carefully with short frequent gasps and increasing the frequency of these gasps with every second until it was impossible to hold back the coughing.

She coughed once. Just once, very quietly, but it seemed to her that all the balconies boomed in reply like empty barrels, the rumbling echo spreading farther and farther in space, sweeping out of Arktur into the mountains. And almost at once she saw Doctor Hoffman's reddish head, glinting golden in the sun, dart out from behind the partition, then her face with large raspberry-red spots on her cheeks.

"I forgot that you were out on the balcony,

Fräulein Krechmar. I hope my chatting hasn't disturbed you."

"Oh no, Fräulein Doctor, I was dozing and never heard a word."

"How do you feel?"

"Splendid."

"Adieu!"

The doctor hastily took her leave and through her growing paroxysm of coughing Inga heard her running away from Levshin's balcony.

Gradually, peace returned—the silence to which she had been listening composedly but a short while ago. There was not a trace of composure in Inga's heart now. She pressed her fingers down on her galloping pulse. She felt that any moment now the stream would break through the skin, and then everything would be over. Inga threw back her covers and let her feet down on the floor. Tattered, scarlet rags, resembling jelly-fish, moved before her eyes, then dissolved into emptiness. And through the breaks and intervals between them floated the bluish-white mountain chain turned upside down. This sensation was heady but fleeting and as soon as it passed Inga tried to get up. And then the hollow ball in her chest rolled over menacingly, as if it meant to push her heart out. She stood stock-still. The frosty air scorched her feet, which were accustomed to warmth. She made a timorous step towards the partition with arms stretched out before her like a skater who had never

stepped on the ice before, and leaning over the railing the way Fräulein Hoffman had done a minute before looked over the partition.

Levshin was lying back on his elbows, which was not according to the rules. He seemed to be expecting to see Inga's white face. He tugged his hand out and waved her back.

"Why did you get up?"

"Come here," she whispered, "at once."

He waved her back more vigorously still and she disappeared. While he unstrapped his bag he listened to the sounds of her settling back in bed. He experienced an onrush of pleasure from the ease with which he moved about. He was certain that he'd get up now and would settle something that needed settling, and he gloried in the knowledge that he was capable of doing so and that he was fit and fully recovered.

He went to Inga with the feeling of supremacy with which doctors approach their patients. The change in her was very noticeable and inspired wistful sympathy, but the words which expressed it in Levshin's conscience seemed odd to him. He thought: "I knew it, I knew that she'd be worse."

"I heard everything," Inga declared solemnly.

"Too bad."

"Too bad for the doctors."

He did not expect such straightforwardness, nor a voice so stern, and looked at Inga silently.

"Since they have cheated the boy, they might cheat me and all of us . . . and you," she said.

"But you and I are really ill. There's no point in cheating us."

"How do I know? Nobody knows," she said obstinately. "Can you tell me why Klebe lied to the boy?"

"He's afraid of losing all his patients."

Inga raised herself up.

"It'll serve him right: let's leave him, let's go away from Arktur."

"Lie down properly," Levshin said in the tones of a doctor. "It's silly to move from one sanatorium to another. Do you think that Stum will follow you about from sanatorium to sanatorium?"

"I don't want to be made a fool of."

"Don't you trust Stum?"

Inga leaned back on her pillow and the warm reflection of the sun, coming from somewhere far, far away, fell softly on her face.

"Perhaps all this is a lie, a lie!"

Levshin made no rejoinder because he wanted to save her somewhat lazy smile and her fleeting and obviously fragile hope. But bitterness returned to Inga instantly.

"Stum must be told of these goings on. Will you tell him? No?" She squinted up at him. "Playing the coward together with your beloved Fräulein Doctor, are you?"

"Whatever she said against Klebe lacks evidence," he said.

"Then you're just like everyone else, you and your Moscow!"

Levshin smiled at her childishness, while her jealousy, which she seemed to be flaunting on purpose, only caused him a moment's surprise. He drew constant comparisons between himself and Inga, trying to recall his condition, long since overcome, when he had been as ill as she was and when he knew not whom to trust. And yet it had been imperative to trust someone in the unquestionable way a child trusts its mother. In Inga's face he seemed to read his recent trials, but like a reader who is apt to find only the meaning he wants to find in a book, Levshin saw nothing but the resemblance between himself and Inga, disregarding almost entirely all that was different between them.

She found breathing difficult, she dreaded excitement and yet she could not suppress it. Dark fever blotches collected on her cheek-bones and from the jerking of the blanket Levshin saw how restless her hands were.

"Poor boy," Inga breathed, blinking to stop the tears. "I want to see him, bring him here."

"I don't know him."

"Then tell Fräulein Doctor to bring him, will you?"

"I'll ask her."

"We are so unhappy here!"

Inga blinked again, but a tear had already escaped from between her eyelids. Slipping down her temple, it turned to ice, freezing a strand of hair together. This tiny drop of ice —first dimming in the cold, then rapidly turning glassy—forced Levshin to see the pain which his subconscious mind preferred to overlook, and he knew now that he could not settle anything and that his restored health did not in any way set him free, but on the contrary it put him under an unpleasant obligation to this patient, to Inga.

"Give me my handkerchief," she said, "it's too cold to stretch for it."

He handed her the flimsy little handkerchief which was lying on the table and she took it, her finger-tips barely showing from under the covers.

"We're at their mercy, we're at their mercy," she repeated over and over again, no longer thinking of holding back her tears.

Levshin interrupted her:

"At whose mercy? What are you saying?" and sat down on the edge of her bed.

The same moment he realized that this was wrong, that he should not have sat down, that he should have soothed Inga with some sort of conviction, with sensible reasoning—but he couldn't very well jump up from the bed now, and, instead, said in harsher tones:

"You're always afraid of something, but there's nothing to be afraid of really!"

And then he heard an absolutely unexpected note in Inga's voice:

"Are you sure that you're not afraid?"

Provocative, brightened eyes stared straight into his own. Levshin threw back his head to get a better look at this merry face, which seemed to belong to another person.

"Bend down," Inga whispered quite differently, blinking frequently and gaily.

He bent down.

"Lower. I'll tell you a very important secret."

He bent lower. Raising herself up, she kissed him on the cheek. Their faces were icy, and her touch seemed light and diaphanous, hardly tangible. Levshin smiled, she reciprocated with a smile and offered him her handkerchief:

"Rub the lipstick off. The Fräulein Doctor might see you."

VIII

THE MAJOR, whose acquaintance Inga had made recently, brought his portable gramophone and his favourite Russian records to her room. He never parted with the records. All alone, skull-cap pulled down over his eyes, he would listen to gipsy strains coming, it seemed, from another world. A tiny tear-drop would sometimes run down his reddish cheek as if it had lost its way. He would turn the handle of the gramophone and, nodding sentimentally, listen to the husky voice of a songstress, long since dead, but who seemed to be still dying.

He boasted of his records to Inga, but she found no pleasure in the old recordings of unfamiliar lyrics nor in the lamentations of a voice that sounded scarcely human. She gazed at the major with unseeing eyes, did not listen to the gramophone but thought of the strange book she had been reading.

It was a novel signed with a pen-name by someone in South America, a man of pessimistic

views, but one who described disasters with such a passionate scorn that they fascinated you and lured you on to a life full of hardship and risk, a life fermented on a painful mixture of struggle and adventure. Somewhere in the ocean, men doomed to death, adventurers and criminals, were borne along in a ship mastered by a scoundrel and a dealer in human destinies. Love, conceived by dregs of mankind—or were they knights?—flared up suddenly with a sweet and fiery ardour in a far-off harbour, somewhere in New Orleans. And the name New Orleans itself, carried through the book like a refrain, melodious and unexplained like Klawadel, kept ringing on and on in your brain like the heart-rending song of the mail carrier's horn. Oh, how you wished to go, to run away, to sail on an unknown ship to an unknown harbour, to condemn yourself to destruction, to a love that knew neither shame nor fear. The unknown author with his sunlit New Orleans and his scum of mankind evoked in Inga a disdain for suffering, for illness and for weakness. And yet her lot—would it be long now?—was a life crowded with thermometers, syringes and injections. They wrapped her in damp bedsheets, rubbed her down with alcohol, they punctured her body, pumped air into her, and in grateful reciprocation of all this she paid her bill with her father's money once a week on Monday.

"How did you like the novel?" the major asked, certain now that Inga was not listening to the gramophone.

"It's shameless, fast and daring. It makes your heart ache while you're reading it. It's the kind of book I like."

The major removed his *pince-nez*, squinting short-sightedly at Inga with limpid eyes, then asked seriously.

"Adventure?"

"No, danger and misfortune."

"I see. It's something we understand: we are unfortunates, too."

"Oh no! We have so little misfortune! I don't even know what we have less—happiness or unhappiness!"

"Do you want variety?"

"I don't want life to be always divided into *musts* and *must nots*."

"Yes, it is boring here. I'm definitely going to leave. I'll go to Locarno in the spring and then to Meran."

"I was told that you fought in the war," Inga smiled.

"Yes."

"Were you scared?"

"We, western Slavs, have been fighting for centuries."

"Were there moments when you were frightened?"

"A few."

"Did you bend when you heard bullets?"
"At war it's best to stay bent."
"And are you scared now?"
"Now?"
"Scared of your T. B.?"
He thought a moment.
"Yes, I am scared."
"Is it more terrifying than the war?"
"It's a slower process. There's plenty of time to think—"
"Of fear?"
"Of everything."
"Do you think everyone is scared?"
"Yes."
"Not Levshin."
"He thinks that he is getting well. He belongs to a particular type of man—their imagination is killed by a sense of security."
"But he *is* better. You've been here a long time. Don't people recover here?"
"Some do."
"What does it depend on?"
The major paused again. He put on his *pince-nez* and read the name on a gramophone record.
"The best thing is to bend, to bend low all the time," he said.
"But I don't want to," Inga exclaimed. "I'm not going to bend."
"Then—"
"I know. But I won't anyway. Let's change

the subject. How did you happen to be in Russia?"

"We western Slavs—"

"Oh, yes, you western Slavs—"

"Was that a sneer? No? I thought— Many of us were brought up in Russia: cadet school, military academy, then a commission. We are a passionate people. But the Russians know how to infect one with their dreams. I lived and dreamed in Kiev. It was a city of enchantment! I heard all of them (he nodded at the records) in the flesh. One woman had a baritone. There was a man, too, who had almost a contralto. Beautiful! I thought it was going to last forever. I had all the fun I wanted. I had a motorcycle and once I was speeding downhill when suddenly a cab appeared round the bend. I crashed right into it! The cabby could hardly collect the wheels! And I was fresh as a daisy! Beautiful!"

"Lord," Inga sighed, "what an exciting experience!"

The major raised his head proudly.

"One night, I was sent post-haste to Montenegro. When I reached the Danube war had already broken out. I was given a company right away."

"Is that much?"

"I was young then," said the major. He took a tiny notebook from his coat pocket and leafed the pages over skilfully with his little finger.

"I spent 651 days at the front. Marched 905 kilometres. Spent over 10,500 hours in trenches. I was wounded twice, both times in the leg. The first time was in 1916—"

"Wait a minute," Inga interrupted. "Did you count all that up afterwards or at the front?"

"We, officers, counted everything that concerned our participation in the war from boredom and for the sake of the game—we had a totalizator. When new men came in we laid bets on who had been in the trenches longer, or who had retreated over a greater distance. I worked out my figures here, 'up on top'."

"Give me your notebook. I'll only take a glance at it, from the beginning or from the end—whatever you say."

The major came up to Inga. Holding the notebook high above her head, he entreated:

"Don't laugh."

"Of course not."

She read the closely written page intently.

"Books?"

"Yes."

"What books?"

"The ones I read through in one go. Or ones I did not understand."

"What are the asterisks for?"

"To show what books I read at one sitting but did not understand."

She glanced at him with dancing eyes.

"*Magic Mountain* even has two asterisks!"

"Yes. Ever read it? Here, on the magic mountain, it's taboo. It's about people like you and me. But here they pretend it doesn't exist."

"Is it hard to get?"

"Try."

"Is it harmful?"

"For doctors. But they say it's harmful for patients."

"I notice that here 'up on top' medicine is trying to replace the church with its supervision."

They both laughed at this apt thought.

"It's true," the major said. "Whatever is considered a sin in heaven is supposed to be bad for you here. It's bad for you to speak of illness, bad to think, bad to love. Love seems to be the worst of all. Did you know it? However," he added hurriedly, "it's not as bad for women."

"Why?"

"They aren't so vehement," the major said, but Inga seemed not to hear and he beat a hasty retreat. "Medicine feels it has been wronged by the *Magic Mountain*, because the writer wrote his book without obtaining the blessing of the Davos Medical Association first. But, I must admit, I did not understand the book. Destiny ruled by chance is a philosophy which deprives the patient of his will."

"And the doctors of their income," Inga supplemented with scorn.

The major felt that they understood one another. A surge of tenderness softened him. Inga's large eyes were dewy and full of an odd curiosity. He had never seen such eyes so close before. He stretched out his hand for the notebook, clasped Inga's arm timidly with his thin fingers and stood still, heartened by the fact that he was permitted to hold her arm. He fumbled for the *pince-nez* in his pocket. He did not notice her mocking smile. Putting on his *pince-nez* and stooping to look deeper into her unusual eyes, he felt as though he had lost his foothold and was plunging into something deadly cold and that in a minute he would scream. He began to tremble. He squeezed her unresisting arm, it was hot, and bending lower, he asked in a shaking voice:

"Have you got a fever?"

Inga pushed him away with her fists. Startled, he straightened up and made a dash for his gramophone. Just then somebody knocked.

Doctor Hoffman and a young man came in followed closely by Levshin.

"Here we are," the doctor said.

The young man came up to the bed, clicked his heels and bowed. Inga gave him her hand. He bowed once more, touched the tips of her fingers carefully and stepped back in true military fashion.

"Willi Bauer," he said quietly and took a step towards the major.

Everyone looked at him in silence, with sympathy. He had reddish hair. The freckles on his face formed a pattern that gave the impression that a butterfly had alighted on his nose, spreading its wings on his cheeks. He looked over twenty.

"Have you grown used to the altitude?" Inga asked.

"I don't think so," Bauer replied politely. "My nose bleeds every morning and evening and there's a shooting pain in my ears as if a football had smacked into my forehead."

"Do you play football?" Inga asked with a quick glance at Levshin.

"No, but when I was a child I was hit by a ball as I was passing a football field, and I remember how my nose bled."

Again they looked at him in silence. He spoke dully, he was not given to mimicry and the ginger butterfly of freckles on his face was motionless as though it had dried up.

"Will you be staying here long?" asked Inga. She diligently repeated all the questions laid down by the local rules of propriety, the questions which she had once been asked.

"I've only got a three weeks' leave after my illness."

"Oh, I see. But if your health. . . your illness demands a longer stay?"

"It would still be three weeks."

"But if it's dangerous for you . . . if the doctors prescribe," Inga persisted.

"Three weeks and not a minute longer," replied Willi Bauer in his army manner.

"But your lungs are bad."

"I had pneumonia, I recovered and got leave. My doctor told me to go up to the mountains to strengthen up," he pointed gravely to his chest.

"I hear that you've got bacilli," Levshin said.

"It makes no difference," Bauer replied without hesitation. "I've got to be back on the job in seventeen days."

"What sort of a heartless job is it?" Inga cried.

"Why do you say that?" Bauer said without altering his assertive manner, "I work for a Viennese firm of interior decorators. We have a good clientele. People envy me quite a bit. All my friends are out of work. I'm sure they'd be glad to develop some bacilli, anything to get a job."

Doctor Hoffman turned towards the balcony door. Coming up close to her, Levshin said:

"Klebe's in a grotesque position."

She made no reply. The major, deciding that Inga did not feel offended, regained his composure.

"You aren't taking your health seriously enough," he said.

"Whatever way you take it," replied Willi Bauer, "I still have to be back in seventeen days' time."

He walked up to the pile of records and clicked his heels.

"Have you got a rumba?"

Inga gave him a resentful look.

"You are perfectly well, anybody can see that. It amazes me why you came here at all? You've never had any bacilli, that's something you ought to know."

"That's exactly what I think," Bauer replied politely, turning round to face her. "The sanatorium has been paid for, that's why I came. Doctor Klebe discovered some bacilli. I am very sorry to cause the sanatorium all this trouble, but I cannot change my plans."

"You're not worrying at all!" Inga challenged him.

"Not at all," Bauer said in a pleased tone. "There's no pain anywhere. The only thing is that my nose bleeds."

"Then what made you come up here?"

"What do you think? I would much rather have taken the cash instead, but I was given leave and sent here without further ado."

"They might refund the money if you ask them," Inga said.

Bauer bared his short upper teeth and the line of pale gum above them. It was his first smile.

"I'd like that," he said dully.

He noticed that no one smiled. The sick young

lady, whose own idea it was to invite him up to her room, was looking at him in an unfriendly way and it even seemed that there was mockery in her eyes. Bauer felt hurt. He smoothed his already very smooth hair. No one spoke for a while. And in that moment of silence all of them heard and recognized a familiar knock on the door.

"I hope I'm not intruding, ladies and gentlemen," Doctor Klebe sang, coming in and stopping at the door, his whole posture expressing his readiness to leave the room at once.

"I'm glad you came," Inga said. "We are trying to talk our young man into staying at Arktur a little longer, but he assures us that there's nothing for him to do here because he's perfectly well."

Doctor Klebe twisted his mouth slightly, portraying doubt, trying at the same time to smile pleasantly as was his habit.

"I am glad," he sighed, "that our dear Herr Bauer feels so well. Unfortunately, subjective feeling does not always reflect the actual state of one's health."

"He's terribly obstinate! He says that even if his life depended on it he would not stay on at Arktur."

"Good God, how your conversation must have run away with you!"

Doctor Klebe concealed his anxiety no longer. Inga was excited. Levshin was watching her

too closely. Klebe noticed it. He picked Inga's temperature chart off the table:

"I'm amazed, Fräulein Doctor, that such a conversation was held in your presence!" he said irritably. "The doctor is the only person one should talk to about illness. Is it necessary to be reminded of this rule, ladies and gentlemen? You'd be surprised at the number of people who develop a disease simply by talking about suffering!"

"We were just chatting," Inga said. "We are trying to prove to our friend, Herr Bauer, that although he's well he's got to go through a course of treatment at Arktur. You are of the same opinion, aren't you, Herr Doctor?"

Klebe twitched his shoulders.

"I'am the only person who is compelled to stay at Arktur, Fräulein Krechmar."

Fortunately there was another knock on the door. Karl came in.

"Good morning," he flashed a rapt smile, "any errands?"

"Yes, please," Inga said. "First, there are some postcards, about six."

"Six at 20 centimes—"

"Then, Karl, call at the bookshop and ask them for a novel called *Magic Mountain*. That's the title, isn't it, Herr Major?"

"No, no," Doctor Klebe broke in like a shot, "I've never heard of such a novel."

"I thought you had a greater knowledge of

literature, Doctor," Inga said, raising herself up on her elbows.

"There is no such novel. Aren't I right, Herr Major?"

"You've spoken to me about it many a time," the major replied gloomily, "and although you prefer Wallace—"

"No, no," Klebe interrupted, "don't write it down, Karl, don't. I'll be going down to the bookshop myself."

He stepped noiselessly up to Inga's bed and regaining his usual anxious manner, crooned, drawing out the words like in a lullaby:

"Allow me to carry out your errand personally, Fräulein Krechmar—." Then, abruptly, in his ordinary voice, "What's the matter?"

Inga coughed gently with timid caution. Her face blanched rapidly. Her elbows slipped down. She stared at Klebe with fear, and when he took her by the shoulders to ease her down on the pillows her face looked dead like a doll's with the colours washed off. The fall jolted her, she coughed and pressed her lips together with a grimace of pain. Then for a second it looked as if her lipstick had started sliding down her chin, but the chin at once grew brighter and darker than the lips. Inga wanted to put her hand to her mouth but Klebe stayed it, and taking a towel handed him by Doctor Hoffman put it on Inga's chest and wiped her chin with it.

"Don't worry," he said calmly and added the word "ice" so quietly that Doctor Hoffman must have only guessed what he meant.

Karl was the first to disappear unnoticed. Doctor Hoffman followed him with businesslike haste. The major, deciding to entrust his gramophone to Bauer, collected his records and tiptoed to the door. Bauer bowed to Inga and Doctor Klebe in turn.

Levshin, too, wanted to leave.

Inga's breath came with a gurgle through her blood-smeared, open mouth.

"Don't go," her words were soundless.

Klebe said gravely, "You must not talk," and without turning his head gave Levshin permission to remain. "Stay," he said and once again wiped the blood off Inga's chin.

With her eyes Inga begged Levshin to come up closer. Her glance chanced fleetingly upon the book that she had just been reading. It lay on the table. She thought that this was the beginning of terrible disasters, that the ship was sailing away on a desperate mission and that she was on it. Sounds she had never heard before rang in her ears as though a storm were coming up, whistling and wailing. Crowds of words rushed through her mind, then they were pushed away into the darkness by two melodious names—New Orleans and Klawadel.

Levshin stood at the foot of her bed afraid to

move. He saw shadows gathering and deepening on her cheeks, the twitching of her eyebrows and the flickering of the eyes which she could not tear away from his, her eyes fromwhich all else had vanished except fear—overwhelming fear.

IX

SPRING came and with it a southern *Föhn*. It flowed like water in a never ending stream, working its way through the valley and washing over the cliffs. Breathing became more difficult. Clothes grew heavier, weighing down shoulders. Snow was melting but rather unwillingly. On the courts in front of the *kurhaus* the ice had softened and curling had to be stopped, but the big skating-rinks were still in good condition and Canadian hockey teams arrived, belatedly for some reason.

Banners with the solitary commanding word "Canada" stretched across the street, fluttering in the wind, their agitation intensifying the sensation of bad weather. Few people turned up at the skating-rink, but the hockey game took place.

White and orange sweaters, tangled up in a ball, rolled from one end of the field to the other. The ball uncoiled into separate threads. These seemed to be blown in all directions by the wind. Then they hurriedly gathered into

skeins, entangling in a ball again, and the ball would again roll about the field. During these minutes it was impossible to follow any one particular player because all seemed to possess common arms, legs and heads, and these changed from one sweater to another with lightning speed.

It was the first time that Levshin was witnessing such a frenzy of human energy. Suspense took hold of him in dragging, vibrating spasms, as if it were his own self flying there, over the ice, scraping it at the sharp turns, the ice hissing and droning, and his braking skates throwing up sheets of white dust. He glanced from time to time at Doctor Hoffman sitting beside him and only managed an admiring:

"Eh? Eh?"

She nodded, well pleased.

He tried to follow the flight of the puck shot along by furious hits with snub-nosed sticks, but his eyes were not fast enough, the puck flew across the ice like a bullet. He only caught up with the game when the referee blew his whistle in order to disqualify a player or to see an injured man off the field. Levshin watched the hockey sticks cutting through the air in the terrifying way of cavalry sabres and the arms, legs and heads of the players strangely appearing to change from the orange sweaters to the white ones, from the white to the orange, evoking both laughter and admiration. And his

sense of health surged stronger within him in response to this invigorating fray.

Spring was the final test which Levshin set himself before leaving the mountains. He took longer walks, tried his strength at gymnastics, and made every effort to root out all trace of invalidity developed through the months spent in bed. And because his period of convalescence, which seemed like eternity only a short while ago, was almost up, he lived more and more in the future, with the people who were waiting for him, deep in the work he would shortly put his newly-acquired strength to. His memory drew up increasingly detailed pictures of his workroom in the slightly gloomy and official house of the Trade Mission, where he had spent three whole years before this ridiculous illness started: the drawings on tracing or wax-paper, smelling of candles, curling up in tubes and rolling across the table with a rustle; thick files with industrial orders; advertising catalogues with coloured pictures of electrotechnical equipment; photographs of Soviet power stations nearing completion and masts holding high voltage transmission lines. How often in that room had they talked of changing the landscape over there, far among the forest-clad hills in the north, or along the banks of rivers in the southern steppes: steel girders towering above the plains, carrying away heavy arcs of cables into the vanishing distance; inky smoke

rising up from peat kilns over emerald-green groves. He thought of the many new photographs that must have piled up in the room while he lay in his goatskin bag on one of Arktur's balconies. His friends awaited him. They sent him countless messages which buoyed him up in his determination to conquer his disease, to prepare prudently for the jump from the glassily frozen mountains into a full, robust and bubbling life. He thought of his friends who had relieved him not only of financial worries but also of any doubt that his unpredictable retirement to the mountains would prove a success.

Carried away by the game, without distinguishing who were leading, Levshin took fearless breaths of the fickle *Föhn* and in his mind he kept repeating something that a friend had written to him: "Work your bellows properly. I hope the holes have healed up. The last postcard from you with the Swiss cottages clustered together as hives in an apiary was cheerful. We are all very glad for your sake. We are sending you some newspapers. They are about the Dnieper Hydropower Station. You have, no doubt, read of its opening in the papers you are getting there, but they don't want to admit how wonderful it is. Ours are much more interesting. There are photos, too, quite impressive ones, but the newsprint—excuse me, our incorrigible evil is newsprint." On his balcony, his arms free of the bag and stretched out before him, Lev-

shin used to hold the Moscow newspaper in front of him until he could hold it no longer. Column after column carried the story of the dam, a titanic comb that passed through the Dnieper's tangled curls, and through the mist of the panorama Levshin divined the contours of details he had known from the plans and saw the distant realization of drawings. The work of Engineer Levshin, his efforts, had contributed in some tiny way towards the fulfilment of the project and his heart contracted with pride but at the same time he was saddened by the thought that he had not been there to witness the opening of the locks and the cascading of the water. And again the resolve to get well would mount in him with redoubled strength: to get well, get well and return home where the future held out both promise and purpose!

He was amazed at himself at times, how cunning, circumspect and calculating his actions had become from the moment his illness began to retreat, and how much he enjoyed his own squeamish prudence which, in the old days, would have only made him scoff. What a wonderful, what a miraculous instinct life was, he thought. Evidently I am not thirty any more but sixty, so strong is my desire to live!

And although the game was fast and exciting, with the referee having his hands full extricating reckless players with broken knees and heads, Levshin did not for a minute forget that it was

still unknown whether he had won his own game with the disease or not.

"It doesn't matter now which sweaters win," he said, "the orange or the white. We've seen the best part of the game. Let's go, my feet are frozen."

"Why didn't you say so before?" Doctor Hoffman started up, but stopped short and added, "But what about Fräulein Inga? You promised to describe the game to her."

"Yes, that's right. But everything will be over while we're walking back and we can get the final results by the telephone from Arktur."

They walked through the town in silence, holding up their coat collars against the tiresomely persistent wind. Levshin took his companion's arm when they were only a short distance from the sanatorium.

"Tell me, what do you think of Inga?"

"She's very nice. I like her just as you do."

"Oh, stop it. You know what I mean."

"No, I don't. I don't understand."

"Come, now."

She pressed his hand to her side with her elbow.

"I may be wrong, you know."

They went on in silence. Just before they reached Arktur, Levshin said:

"Very well then, be wrong, if you must. I want to know your mistaken opinion, that's all."

"Yes," she interrupted irritably, "if you had been knocked down by a bus I would have said: serves you right, don't recover!"

"I'm guilty of recovering," he laughed.

"Yes. Guilty. You behave like a visitor. It's insulting. What are we?—a spring-board into your future?"

"You are not. But Arktur and the mountains are. For you, too."

"Anyway when I begin to recover I shall behave with more tact."

"Well, I'll come and see you another time."

She quickly turned her face to him and looked reproachfully.

"Was your condition worse than mine?" she asked.

"Yes."

"What did you do?"

"I exercised a little patience."

"Oh, I know, it's one of Stum's prescriptions."

"I was quite certain that it was worth my while to get well."

"Were you?" She was silent for a minute, then asked, "Is there anyone waiting for you at home?"

"Everyone is," he said and was surprised at his own words for he had never expressed the thought like this before.

"Everyone means no one."

"It's different with us. When I fell ill—"

"How did it happen? Or, perhaps, no, don't,

I don't want to hear about it. I don't want to talk of the same thing all the time. It's not what really matters at all. Give me my eau-de-Cologne."

Pulling her hands out from under her covers she cupped her palms and Levshin poured out some eau-de-Cologne. Her fingers had become extraordinarily long and when she rubbed them it looked as if they were about to fall apart, joint by joint. She asked for her mirror but handed it back at once.

"Sorry for me?" she asked with a crooked smile.

"Sometimes."

"It's vile of you to answer like that, do you understand it's vile when you're told . . . when a woman tells you she loves you."

They looked at each other in silence. He was as agitated as she and could not say anything. Inga's former charm was returning, colours forced their way back to her face and her thinness seemed sweeter and less pronounced.

"All you want is to get well as soon as you can," Levshin said.

"I'm a better judge of what I want. I want to taste the meaning of life as soon as I can."

"There's plenty of time."

"Don't sound so hopeful, you're not a doctor. There's nothing more ghastly than a doctor's indifference."

"A minute ago you were hurt at my sympathy and now you suddenly accuse me of indifference!"

"Wait . . . sit down."

She moved over a bit and tugged him to her by his sleeve.

"You seem to be in a fever and you can't—"

She did not let him finish his sentence.

"Fever, yes, but not the fever of illness. I hate hypocrites. And yet you are thinking that I am just like all the other girls who try their hardest to conceal their desires because they are afraid of the consequences. I'll be dead anyway before there are any stupid consequences. So please spare me your chivalry."

"But listen, it's ridiculous when a big, grown-up person gets scared of a wasp and flees from it, beating his arms about."

"What wasp?"

"You're deliberately avoiding to look at the truth."

"What truth? Even the major laughs at the gibberish that love is supposed to be bad for our recuperation, or something like that."

"But I've never said anything so stupid."

"Then what did you say? Were you telling me that I didn't know how to obey the rules or that I'd soon be dead?"

She sat up, supporting herself on her thin arms thrust straight into the pillows. Her blanket slipped down her breast, she wanted to cough, she bit her lower lip, her angular shoulders quivered and her eyes, widening, darkened

like an evening sky. Suppressing her cough, she said, spacing out her words monotonously:

"Does my temperature interest you by any chance?"

Levshin could not take his eyes off her eyebrows which drew together and then lifted up the transparent skin on her forehead, and he could not help raising and twitching his eyebrows, too.

"You reason too much," Inga said.

"Very well, I do."

"You—" she began to say and stopped.

Straining her neck, pushing herself up by the tips of her fingers to bring her damp, hot face as close as she could to his, she finished venomously:

"You're just no good as a man probably!"

She threw back her head the better to see him and waited for his words. She was so agitated and her breathing was so peculiar that the need to cough vanished.

Levshin gave a hurt smile.

"You needn't get so angry," he said rising.

"Go away, go away!" she screamed. She bent her arms abruptly and fell back on her pillows.

Levshin went out into the corridor.

He had not felt so tired for a long time now, there was a gnawing pain in his shoulders and back and all he wanted was to reach his *chaise-longue*. But on his way down the stairs he met

Doctor Klebe who saw the change in Levshin at once.

"It's all due to this hockey!" he announced in a singsong voice as if he was gratified to know that hockey could also cause unpleasantness.

"No, it's not the hockey. A visit to that room gets you down."

"Ah, in dear Fräulein Krechmar's room? For a long time I've been wanting to advise you against going there."

"She's always waiting, it's impossible to refuse. And yet when you look at her you go through your own illness all over again."

"It's bad for you, I can feel it," Klebe said, conscious of a familiar anxiety that something was imminent and unavoidable.

"Never mind, I'm leaving soon anyway," Levshin said.

"Leaving?" the doctor exclaimed in alarm. "Why soon?"

But Levshin only nodded and quickened his steps down the stairs.

Klebe pressed his hand to his heart and leaned against the banisters: a coughing attack was starting.

X

HE HAD TO SAVE himself. There was nothing but callousness around him. Everyone thought of themselves and no one cared a damn for him! Alone in his small study he threw himself down on the sofa, then jumped up, started to write a letter, destroyed it, crumpling up the page of foolscap. When the unbalanced Madame Rivash was taking her leave, Klebe could not restrain a sudden parting wish:

"I wish a haemorrhage starts in the old hag's throat, then she'll know!"

He saw horror freeze on Doctor Stum's face and at once began explaining his thought:

"Poor woman—this Madame Rivash. What I mean is what if a haemorrhage should start in her throat?"

Stum could well afford to be magnanimous. He was receiving the salary of chief surgeon at the canton sanatorium, and was carrying on a private practice as well. And Klebe? Poor Klebe!

Once, while searching for patients, Klebe remembered a young Swiss girl who had completed a course of treatment at Arktur not long before.

He wrote to her father, saying that if the course were not repeated there would be an acute exacerbation. The father sent the girl back at once. Klebe liked the girl, he hoped her presence would put some life into Arktur, and, besides, the girl herself did not seem to mind staying in the mountains again for a while. That had made one vacancy less at Arktur. But Stum, examining the girl, had smiled in his straightforward way:

"Go home, my dear, there's nothing for you to do here. You're not ill any more."

Klebe had to swallow this tactlessness: like the patients, he was obliged to carry out the doctor's orders. In his rage he swore at Stum:

"The devil, he might at least think of the patients even if he doesn't care a hang for me and my Arktur!"

Everything that could possibly be contrived to put Arktur on its feet had long since been contrived by Doctor Klebe. If a patient began to talk of going home, Klebe at once saw a relapse in his condition. If a patient began to feel too well, Klebe thought: maybe he'll have an accident if he's sent on a ride in a sleigh or encouraged to attend the tea dances at the *kurhaus*. Klebe saw no harm in these involuntary and rarely successful designs, because he was quite certain that he loved his patients and was sincere in his solicitude for them.

The major once said:

"Our kind Klebe wants all his patients to live long, but only at Arktur."

Indeed, in a certain sense Doctor Klebe resembled England whose motives of lofty chivalry always happened to coincide with motives of gain. He only lacked the British sense of humour in order to make his mercenary aims look like benevolence. Like England, he loved his nobleness, but he was not prepared to defend it at any cost.

He received his education in a European university where medicine was revered as the most humane of sciences, and in the depths of his soul he was true to his upbringing. What was happening to him now was not taking place in the depths of his soul but on some highly sensitive surface which had grown used to a life of ease and along which the university with its humanism never even slid. This surface was Klebe's guard over the inviolability of his inner feelings. It was his belief that if he saved Arktur he would cure his patients. And it was no fault of his that Arktur could only be saved by incurable patients.

Klebe took up his pen. He was composing a letter to a German firm of dealers in chemicals, requesting them to send him a free calcium preparation for experimental use at Arktur. It was not the first request of this kind, and every time he made it he dreaded a refusal. But the firm was a generous advertiser and sent whole packages of 5-cm.^{3} ampules of calcium free of charge, wishing, in their polite accompanying letters, the Herr Doc-

tor Klebe success in his experiments and asking him to advise them of the results. And the Herr Doctor Klebe, carefully tearing up their letters and painting the word "gratis" on the packages over with ink, added an item to his patients' weekly accounts in his beautiful handwriting: so many injections at so many francs per ampule, total so many francs.

Plucking up courage he wrote to the firm that he was continuing to use their valuable calcium preparation in scientific research with good results and begged to be given the opportunity of finishing his experiments in the interests of science and the firm. He usually wrote to them on Thursday—the previous Monday was long forgotten and the coming one was far away—and the time factor smoothed out a certain discrepancy between his letter to the firm and the accounts he presented his patients. But then it was not this discrepancy that troubled Klebe at all: he worried that this time he might have to pay for the calcium, and he was seized by a terror he could not fight down that it would be the cost of calcium that would eventually ruin the sanatorium. He had to do something to save himself.

At the worst he could admit hopeless cases, which all the other sanatoria and, particularly, the boarding houses would be glad to send to Arktur. But that would mean surrendering Arktur's reputation of being a happy place, where the sick recovered, and giving it the notoriety of a funeral

parlour. Moreover, Klebe, a sick man, sought his own destiny in that of his patients, and deaths had an oppressive effect on him which, like his illness, he was obliged to conceal.

There was a time when a Lucerne doctor he knew would send patients to Arktur when he found nothing definitely wrong with them, simply out of sheer friendliness to Doctor Klebe. But that happened at a happier time when Klebe thought nothing of inviting the Lucerne doctor, together with a party of friends, for a visit up in the mountains. Now his friend merely sent him postcards with views of Lucerne every Christmas and Easter.

Resolutely, Klebe stuck down the flap of the envelope, then, pushing it away suddenly, held it down with his fist and fell to musing. Very well, supposing another "gratis" parcel of calcium arrived. Would it make up for the loss caused by a patient's departure? One freckled Willi Bauer was worth hundreds of ampules of calcium. And supposing Levshin left? Or Krechmar? Or Levshin together with Krechmar? But that was impossible! They would not go together, they would go separately. Separately? But that meant they'd go anyway! No, no. One of them had to stay. That's it, one would stay. Again that meant that the other would go. It would be dreadful to lose another patient! He wouldn't be able to bear it! How many would be left in that case? The English couple and the major, that made three, then there were three more—six all told! To cover expenses, to

say nothing of the debts, he needed eight. Damn it, six patients! He simply had to have at least another. He must make Inga stay. She had just received a remittance. What if she died? No, she wouldn't die. She'd live while she had the money. Patients like her linger long. Stum would take care of her; he'd probably pay her keep himself if her money gave out. It would be just like him, the fool. That would make seven. That was better. He should be able to find an eighth. But what if the English couple— No, they wouldn't leave. The preacher liked Arktur and he'd stay on although he had finished his work at the church long, long ago.

Once English people find something to their liking—but they're saintly fools, too. Now, Levshin was sure to leave. There wasn't any way to hold him back. His recovery had gone too far. Maybe Stum would influence him? In that case he could let Inga go. Inga Krechmar was seriously ill. He had to act before all those cripples ran off. O God!

Somebody knocked. Klebe started. It was Lizl with a pail of water.

"May I wash the floor here, Herr Doctor?"

He came up to her. Lizl was wearing a pink oilcloth apron, her black curls were in disorder and beads of sweat were standing out through the dark down on her upper lip—she had just finished washing the stairs on all the four floors. She had a very perky look, mostly because of the curls.

"Well Lizl," the doctor drew an easy breath, "when are we going to get married?"

She giggled and wiped her lips first on one shoulder, then on the other.

"I'm not joking. I'm tired of this big house. I'll leave it and go away with you somewhere."

"O-oh!" Lizl cried, "leave your big house!"

"To hell with it. We'll make our home somewhere in the mountains. There are some very nice places near Glarus or Wesen. We'll buy a little cottage and you'll have a household of your own."

"O-oh! a cottage—as small as this?" and Lizl stuck out a short plump red little finger.

"We'll do whatever we like," said Klebe.

"What if I wanted to go to the pictures?"

"You'd go to St. Moritz."

"And if I wanted to dance? You won't dance with me, will you?"

"You may dance with whoever you please. I'm not the jealous sort of man."

"Then you'd better look for another girl. I like Italians—there's a people for you! I used to go round with one. I thought he'd leave me no flesh at all, he used to pinch me so!"

"If you want to be pinched," Klebe said lightheartedly, moving up closer.

She wiped her face again on her shoulders.

They were interrupted by the sound of coughing outside the door. Klebe sprang away to his desk and pretended he was blotting a letter.

"Come in!" Klebe called, holding the letter to the light and examining the ink which had dried long ago.

The major entered.

"Back from your walk? The wind is dying down, it seems."

"Not in the least. There is something I want to tell you, Herr Doctor."

"At your service," crooned Klebe, his eyes following the direction of the major's gaze.

Lizl had started washing the floor. Her face was hidden by the swinging curls, the neck showed blue where a razor had trimmmed her bob. She rolled the cloth over the boards with a sweeping motion, then wrung out the dirty-green water with a squelch. They could see her well developed, heavy hips and the way her strong and supple body followed the motion of her arms, bending now this way, now that.

The major and Klebe watched Lizl in silence as if they had just discovered something profoundly astonishing, and never seen by them before. Then the doctor suddenly took the major by the arm and led him to the door.

"Let us go, dear Herr Major. There's nothing to hold us here."

In the corridor the major, trying to drive away his blissful dream, could not bring himself to speak at once. And when the doctor touched him like a person whom one dreads to frighten but who has got to be wakened, he said:

"Yes, yes, don't be angry with me, Herr Doctor. I realize you're in difficulties. And please don't think that I do not appreciate your kind care."

"When?" the doctor asked lifelessly.

"I don't know yet. I haven't decided where to go—Lugano or Locarno. But if I don't leave the mountains now, I'll stay here forever. I must go. I'm a soldier, and when I hear the bugle, I've got to break camp!"

They walked up the stairs together and the much trodden boards creaked comfortably. They parted reticently with the merest of nods: the major going to his room, Klebe to Inga's.

He was unable to go through with his usual programme of "how are you?" "temperature?"—his poise had deserted him, his speech was devoid of embellishments. He shambled about the room, rubbing his hands, hunching his shoulders; then he stopped in front of the looking-glass with his back to Inga and shrugged his shoulders as if wondering—who is that man there, wearing a white coat, shaking feverishly, rubbing his hands and muttering?

"Disappointment, my dear Fräulein Krechmar, we know what disappointment is. Sometimes we are even forced to regret our attachments. A patient whom we succeed in bringing back from the dead grows dear and close to us. We are proud of him, we share in his happiness with him. And what of those others whom we are unable to cure in

spite of all our efforts? They are even dearer to us, more beloved, like the unfortunate child whom mothers love most. But who would believe that we are guided by altruism and science alone?"

"Who would, indeed?" Inga said.

But Klebe did not hear.

"And what do we receive in reciprocation? The moment a patient recovers he forgets everything and is prepared for any sort of rashness. Take the major, now. He has not even recovered. He'll kill himself if he goes down below, yet he's set on going. Or take Levshin. One awkward step and all the efforts which have produced such marvellous results will crash into nothingness. Yet Levshin is resolved to leave us too. And he won't listen to reason, he even suspects an egoistical motive in my persuasions! Egoism and I! Good God! That's another disappointment."

Klebe stretched his arms heavenwards and turned to Inga. He stood for a few minutes in this slightly biblical attitude, as if he had been turned to stone. Inga looked at him with unblinking eyes, lips pressed so tightly together that her lipstick was all gone, leaving her lips white. And even her eyebrows stopped their twitching, and the skin stretched tightly across her forehead looked dead. Klebe thought—ought he, perhaps, to beat a retreat and turn it all into idle chat, or should he, perhaps, attack Levshin more vigorously still to prove the veracity of his words? But Inga did not seem to doubt his words. Yet in her eyes Kle-

be saw hatred, hatred sharpened to a point and the point was not aimed directly at him but at something quite near, close to his ear lobe, and this closeness sent a shiver through him. And at that moment Inga's face so clearly expressed all that she had suffered through her illness that Klemust be understood how bad her case was. He instantly found the right thing to do.

"I've quite forgotten," he cried, slapping his forehead smartly, "why, it's pay-day! It's pay-day at Arktur today. They'll be coming to count my poor centimes soon. Excuse me, Fräulein Krechmar, I really must be going."

He ran out of the room, buoyed up a little by his resourcefulness, thinking: whatever way you look at it, I pay and pay while the patients just lie in their beds. Nobleness was not on their side of the ledger!

Inga remained motionless for a long time.

A jingling of bells and a heavy stamping of hoofs, champing slightly on the melting snow, floated in from the distant road. And then a Tyrolean yodle was born in the crystalline air and it flowed like a stream of water—ulli-ulla-ulli-ullo—now dying away on a high note, now breaking off into bird-like laughter. The mountains echoed the song loudly and after it had rolled away they bubbled on politely in falsetto for a while.

Unbearable anguish came into the room with this eternal wistfully-playful song of the mountains, and it forced Inga out of her immobility

to action, which only a few minutes ago would have amazed her. Clothes, which had not been disturbed in the sanctity of the closet for a long time, were needed suddenly. The choosing and examining of stockings and *lingerie*—a procedure somewhat exciting to women—fascinated Inga with its novelty, but then she dressed quickly and almost carelessly, afraid of diverting her mind from the purpose which held her in its spell and guided her. She even gave her face but cursory glances in the mirror, and only when she was quite ready did she take a long look at herself, pausing to reflect that she had grown thinner but that actually she had always been thin and that it suited her. High heels were something new to her again, and she felt like a schoolgirl who had been presented with her first pair of high-heeled shoes. Her knees shook, there was cramp in her calves, and her steps became shorter and shorter until they came to a sudden halt before a door which she was going to enter for the first time.

"Come in," she heard Levshin's voice.

Unclenching her hand with an effort, she gripped the solid door handle and pulled the door. It seemed to her that this needed as much resolution as to enter an operating-room. But as soon as she stepped over the threshold she felt her confidence returning. She crossed the room easily and went out to the balcony to Levshin. He was astonished to see her.

"Are you allowed to get up?"

"Do I have to ask permission for every step I make for the rest of my life?"

"Is there a change?"

"In what?"

"I don't know, in your condition perhaps."

"Does it interest you?"

"Well, since you're getting up, dressing and calling on your neighbours—"

"Neighbours? Very well then, my dear neighbour! I am feeling fine! So much so that I wish to and shall get up."

"Stum, I suppose, thinks the same?"

"Stum? I don't know what he thinks. I'm very fond of Stum but, really, you know, my condition hardly depends on him."

"I thought it did, definitely."

"Oh well, if you like. Stum insisted on the pneumathorax. I had never had haemorrhages or pleurisy until then. Now . . . now I'm entirely dependent on Stum, isn't that so?"

"Medicine is one profession which is never forgiven anything."

"I'm not blaming Stum."

"He can't be blamed. He's a good man," Levshin said.

"But I said I was fond of him. Isn't that enough? Would you have me worship him?"

"I don't know how to put it, but in order to doubt his words you must first obey him. But you seem to be feeling fine as it is."

"I've got to say it some time, or else I'll get to be like the major: I'll be scared to take a step away from Davos!"

Inga sat down at Levshin's feet the way he often sat at hers.

"In the end everybody leaves Arktur," she said looking away, "and I've made up my mind to leave too."

He made no reply. Her voice showed her uncertainty and even her unbelief in what she said. One could think that she had not arrived at any decision and that her sudden visit and her calculated speech were simply a manifestation of her treacherous illness.

"You are leaving too, aren't you?" she asked with feigned unconcern, but swung round immediately and glanced into Levshin's eyes.

The ruse was too transparent. Her desire to catch him out in something, to expose him, was too obvious, and a wave of indignation rushed to Levshin's head.

"Yes," he answered. "I'm leaving. I have to return to work."

They went on staring at each other. Levshin could hear the blood pulsating in his temples. Inga was endeavouring to establish an irksome bond between him and her own destiny, and he was annoyed by his compassion for her. He did not want to be a slave to her illness. He repeated his lie with an obstinacy almost bordering on hostility:

"I have to return to work. Immediately."

"Pity I learnt about this from other people," Inga said quickly. "Good-bye."

She offered him her hand. The palm had grown damp and cold.

"And you will leave the mountains in spite of its being spring?" she asked, as if it was her last thought, and turned to leave the room.

"Why not, when even you are not afraid of the spring," Levshin said in a low voice.

He sensed immediately the cruelty of the word "even," but it was a cruelty he had to summon to his aid, and he was relieved that Inga said no more and walked away without another look at him. Her gait was a little strange as though it were the first time that she was walking in high-heeled shoes.

To calm his agitation he got up from the *chaise-longue* and went into his room. He noticed in the mirror that his eyes had grown a little red from the excitement and he admitted to himself that he was ashamed of his lie.

The sound of footsteps coming to his door startled him, because he thought it was Inga returning and that explanations would ensue. But it was Karl.

"I've brought a note from the Herr Doctor. Will there be an answer?"

"Thanks. Later."

The envelope was sealed with care. The letter ran:

"Dear Herr Levshin, I must disclose to you my plan which will facilitate your stay at Arktur and allow you to continue your course of treatment which is so essential for you. I took the liberty of telling Fräulein Krechmar that you were going away, and I have no doubt that that will hasten her departure which, by the way, she has been contemplating for some time. If you take a short trip to a place in the vicinity, Fräulein Krechmar will most assuredly be gone before you return. Your stay at Arktur would then no longer be made irksome by anyone and that would give me the greatest pleasure.

"Sincerely yours,

"Dr. Klebe."

Crumpling up the letter Levshin threw it on the wash-stand and ran out to the balcony. So it was all Doctor Klebe's doing—the machinations of an unbidden doer of good deeds!

The picture of Inga leaving his room with unsteady steps rose before Levshin once again and he now realized that he had insulted her and had unwittingly helped another to deceive her.

He stood listening to what was going on within him. A vast tract of land, changeless and tranquil, stretched away before his eyes: a broken line of ice-capped summits, dark forests bordering the foothills, shepherds' huts, their roofs barely

showing through the snow on the slopes, a motionless sunlit sky. As usual the scene inspired him with calmness and confidence. No, he had not been unjust, there was nothing for him to right, and the deceit or rather white lie would only benefit him and poor Inga.

"It's a good idea to take a trip to the mountains," Levshin said to himself. "Life here has become too stagnant, it needs shaking up."

Come to think of it, weren't all these pretentions of Inga's an encroachment on his liberty? She was grieved because he gave her no cause for grievance. She reproached him because he owed her nothing. This was a stupid, a ridiculous state of affairs!

A merry yodle suddenly reached him from afar and he nodded, accepting its playful invitation.

XI

THE TRAIN was passing by the ravine wherein lay Klawadel, and Levshin turned away from the window. His memory at once called up the song of the mail carrier's horn. Its simple melody awakened different emotions in people who had ever surrendered a particle of their existence to the balconies of Arktur. To Levshin it meant a call to life. And he immediately remembered a conversation he had had with Inga about Klawadel and how she had listened to the melody, which also made her dream. In order not to spoil the alluring picture of Klawadel which his fancy had conjured up long ago, he thought it best to avoid seeing the town which was lovely, no doubt, but different from the Klawadel of his imagination. Perhaps he would meet Inga again one day and she would ask him what Klawadel was like, and then it would be simple to reply that Klawadel was the dream that she had dreamed on Arktur's balcony.

This first, rather wistful memory of Inga van-

ished as soon as the outskirts of Davos were left behind. The train was climbing up the hill, halting at tiny stations. The peaks of the mountains crowded closer to the railway, the dark boulders and rocks peeping out from the snow with less and less confidence.

At Filisur Levshin wandered about the station. It was perched on a cliff suspended over the narrow, almost entirely enclosed Albula valley. There was a fountain on the very edge of the cliff—a stone pillar with a long tap from which a spray of water shot icily down into the trough-like basin, rumbling hollowly and sending up a silver spray. New-fallen snow lay near by: it was loose under a lacy melting crust. Far below on a humped piece of ground clustered a village with a pointed, awl-like church steeple. The village was also covered with snow and lightly wrapped in a thin mist which looked leaden in the shadow of the overhanging mountain and smoky-yellow in the sun. And although spring had already come here, too, it could hardly hold its own; Levshin sensed quite distinctly the invisible, warning breath of nearby glaciers. But the cold, the snows and the mist over the valley held such purity that there were all the signs of spring and the muttering of the unfreezing fountain seemed to hint at spring's approach.

While knowing full well that he was nearing the line of eternal snow, Levshin could not help

feeling that spring was awaiting him at the end of his journey. Fantastically-shaped rocks floated past the windows of the train, which with bated breath seemed to take wary glances at its curving trail as though disbelieving the possibility of climbing precipices, overhanging deep chasms. Like rockets the carriages slowly soared over the heights of Bergun, leaving below them the spiralling road with viaducts hewn out on its gigantic coils standing on top of each other, the ones below resembling piled up snuff-boxes.

In Engadin the sun pierced the valley with placid contentment. Round the trees, oases of thawed ground showed their readiness for resurrection. But the climb up the Bernina road disclosed nature's haughtiness to the full: the blueness of the sky became flatter and more dauntless, a wind started up and beat against the wide windows of the train, the snow on the fields cast up blinding reflections. And then above the snow-drifts filling the ravines and the chain of carelessly scattered mountain tops rose the petrified glacier of Morterach, the spur of the great Bernina Mountain, with an air of indifferent superiority. Mighty as the sun itself, it unhurriedly spilt the sun's reflection over the little insignificant train, which, squinting and blinking with the curtains over its windows, crawled up unobtrusively, as though put to shame, past telegraph poles which looked no bigger than matchsticks.

Levshin got out of the train at the first stop after the pass. The station was deserted, there was nobody on the platform. He was the only passenger to stop here. The train quickly disappeared from view, as though slipping down the mountain. There were only two buildings in the distance: one was a two-storeyed hotel standing on a big rock; the other was a restaurant pavilion nestling at the foot of the rock. Levshin walked up to the hotel along a path trodden through snow-drifts. The biting, icy wind buffeted him and he hurried to gain the shelter of a roof. Huge words, grafted on to the rock, proclaimed the name of the station and the hotel—Alp Grüm—and also that the most wonderful view of the glaciers could be had from the hotel terrace, so many feet above sea level. The Swiss cross on the base of the terrace officially authenticated the indisputability of this presumptuous statement.

The house had a well-heated atmosphere, the water on the wash-stand was warmed and the cosiness of the room at once appealed to Levshin. He felt drawn to the ice-free window.

There, underfoot, gaped an abyss a thousand metres deep, the dark blue space inexplicably combining with flight and petrification. At the bottom of the precipice wavered the half-tones of the wintering orchards of Weltlin, stretching across the valley to the crests of the neighbouring Italian Alps. Grandeur was so much within reach here that the endless space beyond the

window appeared to be a continuation of the house itself.

Levshin experienced a new, light feeling of bodily harmony. He wanted to share it with someone and again thought of Inga. What a pity she was not there and that she was so desperately ill.

He unpacked the books he had brought with him, set down at a table by the window, found the right page and holding it down with his hand gazed for a long time into the valley.

The Sunday train brought many tourists. Levshin saw them when they followed one another along the path to the hotel. They carried their skis on their shoulders and from afar looked like marching warriors armed with spears. Suddenly Levshin recognized a familiar figure at the very end of the line. It was Doctor Hoffman. She was not carrying skis and Levshin knew her by her walk.

He went out to the porch to meet her. Her face was flushed and he thought her very attractive. He had never seen her so carefree and gay before.

"Klebe sent me up to see how you're getting along."

"In other words, you wouldn't have come, if he hadn't sent you, eh?"

"Possibly. When all's said and done, you're my patient, too, not only Doctor Klebe's."

Even archness became her and, in general,

she looked different, in a jumper, tied at her neck with a bright red tasselled cord, instead of her stern white doctor's coat.

"How is Fräulein Inga?"

"She's all right."

"Is she planning to leave?"

"Yes, I think so."

"Why the frown? Did you think I wouldn't ask about Inga?"

"I didn't think she'd be the first you'd ask about."

"But we've said hello to each other, haven't we?"

"I thought it would come a bit later."

"A little sooner or a little later—let's not bargain about it."

"Very well. Let's have all your questions."

"What about?"

"About Inga."

"I've already done that. Do you want to talk about her?"

"No, but you are the one who started the subject."

"I've finished and you're still on it."

"But it's you who's talking."

They both laughed.

"Now here is my plan," said Levshin, "first we go for a walk, then we eat."

"Accepted."

"Or perhaps you'd rather do it the other way round?"

"Whatever you choose suits me. You're the master here."

"Here in the mountains?"

"In the mountains and in the room."

"Let's go then."

In a little anteroom off the hall they tried on some mountain shoes, pulled on thick woollen socks and picked out some sticks. There was not a cloud in the sky, the sun was noticeably warm, but the cold held on tenaciously and their spiked shoes rang on the path.

"Wait," she said, taking off her rucksack. "I've brought some goggles along and we've also got to put some vaseline on our faces because of the sun."

"Oh, nothing will happen to our faces."

"No, wait."

She started rubbing vaseline into her face and ears carefully, then smeared a bit on Levshin's cheek. He wiped the vaseline off with his handkerchief, but, laughing, she gave him another pat and he rubbed the vaseline all over his face. They put on their smoke-green goggles.

"Were you fond of dressing up when you were little?" she asked.

"I liked to play circus."

"And I loved fancy-dress balls."

"A white coat and some instruments in the pocket, eh?"

"That's not very original."

"But that's how I've always seen you."

"Today is not always."

"So I see."

She walked ahead of him. The narrow path demanded caution and they had to walk along it carefully. She stopped from time to time and so he had to watch with redoubled attention where she had stepped, for her nearness blocked his vision.

"Let me walk in front," he said.

"On the condition that we take turns."

"All right."

"And we stop the minute we feel tired."

They changed places.

The path led towards the pass and the ascent soon began. The glacier towered clumsily above them, oppressive in its greatness. They walked for a long time but it seemed to follow them and they began to feel that they would never part with it, that they could walk on and on for a lifetime and yet always be walking past it. Through their goggles the glacier looked frosted green, clear like transparent bottle glass, and the sky above was grey and hard like oilcloth.

The path disappeared when rocks blocked the slope. Ski tracks stopped here and vanished. They began to sink in the snow and it became difficult to walk. Levshin climbed up on a bare, wind-swept rock and gave his hand to Doctor Hoffman. Holding on to each other, they stood on the rock and looked about them. The glacier was hard by. All nature seemed to shrink before

it in apology. They took off their goggles and tried to look at it but it dazzled them with the brilliance of a smelting furnace. They shut their eyes.

"How far do you think it is?" he asked.

"Half a day's walk at least."

"You wouldn't reach it in a day," she retorted smiling, giving him a gentle push.

He lost his balance and jumped off the rock, pulling her down with him. He put his arm about her to save her from falling, and they laughed, knee-deep in the snow, blinded by its brilliance. Their thickly smeared faces gleamed and this made them laugh the heartier. They clambered out of the snow-drift getting in each other's way. He did not want to unlock his arms, holding her close and gazing at her laughing mouth, finding something startlingly lovely in her smile. She freed herself with gentle firmness and put the goggles back on his face and hers.

On the way back she walked in front, and her attraction for him was definite and stirring now and had she suddenly wished to change places he would have refused.

They reached the restaurant feeling hungry and pleasantly tired with the tiredness that only a day spent outdoors in winter can cause. The sun was warm and they could choose a table on the open terrace, nestling above a precipice. A plump, short-legged Italian waitress brought a fresh table-cloth and a menu card boasting a

simple choice of national fare. They ordered some *spaghetti* and a bottle of Chianti. Levshin asked for brandy as well. And in the sunlight their meal took on the triumphant colours of contentment: the amber of the brandy, the blood-red splashes of tomato sauce on the *spaghetti*, the beef-red Chianti. The bottle, in its customary woven basket, soon grew empty. They also ordered cheese and coffee and this disappeared as quickly.

Their dinner over, they went up to the balustrade, leaned on it and gazed into the abyss, now and then turning to look at one another. And at this close range their vision blurred and their eyes, accustomed to the contemplation of abysmal depths, lost their focus.

Alpine jackdaws, like scraps of black paper blown by the wind, swooped up above the terrace, as if it were a nest, with a thin panicky whistling.

"That's a sign of something or other," she said.

"You are mistaking them for ravens."

"They belong to the same family."

"Do you want them to be prophetic just for us two?"

"I'm thinking only of us."

"Then I agree," he smiled, "their whistling does seem to hold a promise."

Before leaving the restaurant he bought a bottle of Cinzano, which the pleased waitress wrapped carefully in paper.

"And now for home," he said.

At the hotel they changed their shoes in the same little anteroom.

His room had been heated in their absence and it was very warm. Close to each other at the window they looked at the sunlit abyss of Weltlin and further away at the mountain range blue with snow, and it seemed to them that they had resumed their interrupted gazing from the terrace, and their eyes met with the same blurred vision again.

"It's the wine," she said.

"No, it's not," he said and pulled her to him, almost lifting her off her feet and drawing her away from the window.

Passion drove out all else, but then it passed away and they heard again, as though it had deceived them, sounds of life going on about them; skis clattering on the porch, the grandfather clock chiming decorously in the hall, a sudden rush of voices and lively stamping in the corridor.

He kissed her on the temple where a pulse was beating softly beneath a thin down of hair. He wanted to be tender with her because she seemed so deeply moved.

"Would you like some Cinzano?" he asked getting up and unwrapping the bottle.

"No."

There was no corkscrew so he pushed the cork in with a pencil and filled a thick cut-glass tumbler.

"How amazing that it did not happen earlier," she said.

She moved nearer the wall where a rectangle of sunlight beat through the window. Her tumbled hair blazed up brightly and her teeth gleamed with a glancing reflection of the sun.

"But I feel as though it had always been so," she contradicted her own words.

"In thought," he said.

"In dreams. And now it's real, it is real, isn't it?"

She strained towards him.

"I was terribly scared when you were so ill."

"I remember. But was I so very ill?"

"Yes, I wept at night."

She put her arms around him and drew him close.

"I thought I'd never stop weeping, but now I know that you won't die."

"No, never," he smiled.

"Don't laugh. For me you'll never die. Tell me, what do you think, what will happen now?"

"Everything will be fine."

"Yes but what, what?"

"I don't know. Let's not make any guesses."

"You're right. But what do you think?"

"But that's guessing."

"I don't understand . . . but you —"

He did not let her finish and kissed her again.

When they walked to the station the sun was setting and the mountains were parting with

it in hushed reverence and the rosy hues of the snow faded in melancholy. The man and the woman said good-bye, saying with their eyes alone what they could not put into words because of the crowd of skiers boarding the train.

"This is another world—it's not like Arktur," she said, "I've been to another world with you."

"We've forgotten Arktur."

"Shall I give your regards to Arktur?"

"Yes. Remember me to Inga."

"Inga?" she asked loudly, turning to look back at him from the step of the train.

"Never mind," he cried, "I forgot. How stupid of me!"

They waved to each other. He noticed how her face darkened. And instantly he pictured his departure from Arktur in every detail: he had left without saying good-bye to Inga, locking his room stealthily. He felt blood rising to his face and strode away, trying to fight back his embarrassment.

XII

EVER SINCE his downfall began—when he sold the Rolls-Royce and bought a small car and then sold it as well, discharged the superfluous personnel, and his creditors, proclaiming themselves owners of Arktur, first turned Doctor Klebe's pockets out shamelessly —he had not known so much suffering as on this second day of Easter.

Stum arrived early in the morning on an unprofessional visit in order to wish his patients a happy Easter. He set great store by this association with his patients, in whose existence the only difference between holidays and weekdays lay in a biscuit served with their after dinner coffee instead of the usual bun. He called on Doctor Klebe and learnt that Levshin was away in Alp Grüm and that Inga was planning to leave the sanatorium. He stood staring at the floor, hands thrust in pockets, and spoke doggedly with the accents of a Retian peasant:

"You shouldn't have let Levshin go without my consent."

"But, Herr Doctor! I should only be too happy if my patients stayed here forever!"

"That's quite unnecessary, Herr Doctor."

"But for me—"

"I have been invited here as a practising physician."

"I understand. But Levshin said he would return as soon as Fräulein Krechmar goes."

"Apparently, there is some connection here that I do not grasp," Stum said hollowly, tapping his foot on the floor.

"That's just it," Klebe grew animated, "I had to make a choice. They can't stay on together."

"I see. Then one of them has to move to another sanatorium."

"I don't claim to be a saint—it's too much to ask of me that I should bother about other sanatoria!"

"What about the patients?"

"But it is the patients I'm thinking of. Do you think I am pleased that our dear Fräulein Krechmar is leaving us?"

"She will not leave without my permission."

"She wanted to have a word with you."

"I'd like to be advised earlier of my patients' intentions."

"After all I'm a sick man too, Herr Doctor," Klebe breathed agonizingly, moving quickly to the door of the balcony.

"You are ill but you are not a patient. You are misusing the sanatorium: you are running it instead of taking a cure in it. It's not a creditable method of treatment."

"It's a method of existence, Herr Doctor," Klebe's reply came in a choking whisper.

"A method of suicide in our times," Stum said.

"Perhaps, perhaps. Our times are to blame and not I. In the present case not all has been lost. Levshin will return and as for our dear Fräulein, you will, of course, be able to convince her to go on with the cure."

"Cure from what?" Stum growled. "I'll go up and see what I can do."

He came across Doctor Hoffman near the laboratory. He took her arm and led her to the lift while she smiled at his pleasant and roughly tender clumsiness.

"Well, how's our Levshin? Klebe tells me you've been to see him."

"Oh, he has never felt so well as he does now!" she said, flushing.

"What are the symptoms?" Stum asked as if it were a consultation.

"Well, he is very . . . how shall I put it . . . very . . . altogether—"

"Ah, I see," Stum said with the same air of concentration. "From a doctor's point of view it is a very promising sign if a patient is . . . hm . . . altogether—"

His smooth, well-groomed moustache twitched. She noticed it and flushed so brightly that even her ears grew warm. She burst out laughing. He led her out of the lift by the elbow and said in a bass:

"Let us call on our young lady here."

Inga was gathering up the odds and ends on her dressing-table, there was a smell of perfume, her packed suitcase gaped open in the middle of the room.

"I so wanted to see you!" Inga cried, throwing out her scented arms and coming up close to Stum.

"I see you have packed. Were you coming over to my place?"

"Don't make fun of me. I was going to find you and to tell you all about it and ask your advice."

"What advice do you want? My only advice is: undress and go back into bed. And pretend that all this," he pointed to the suitcase, "had never been. Doctor Hoffman is of the same opinion, am I right?"

"Certainly," Doctor Hoffman said without looking at Inga, and gravely took out the hammer and stethoscope out of her pocket as if she meant to start an examination at once.

"No, that's out of the question," Inga said. "Everything, everything must be changed."

Stum lightly put an arm round her shoulders and walked out on to the balcony with her. Rare

and melting flakes of spring snow were hastening down to the earth, half-obliterating the countryside beyond.

"Look at the sky," Stum said softly. "It's quite possible, you know, that in an hour or two it will become transparent and bright. And how difficult it will be then to picture this lid of zinc which is now clamped down on the valley."

Inga shook her head.

"That's too poetic. It doesn't happen like that in life, not in my life."

"That's exactly how it's going to be in your life."

Stum raised his hand.

"Can you see that white house on the hill?"

"It's your hospital, I know that."

"Yes. There are two hundred patients in it — it's been like that every year, for the last twenty years. And so if we are to talk of life and of how things happen in this life—"

"I believe you. But the trouble is—" she faced him, "the trouble is that I trust you and I don't trust myself. I don't believe that I can abide by your rules, your standards: that I should lie in bed and not tire myself with any kind of work, risk, danger and oh, I don't know what!"

"You must learn to be obedient, that's all."

"Then your wife—is it all right to ask?"

"Yes."

"Your wife—you were married?"

"Yes."

"Was she disobedient, too?"

Stum was silent. He stared at the snow-flakes flying about in a confused dance beyond the window, as if in them he would find the answer whether he should reply to Inga's question or not.

"Forgive me," she said very quietly and placed her fingers on his arm.

And he saw his wife's fingers, the way they looked a little before the end—long, with broad joints, the nails with a home-made manicure curved like small canoes. He gazed at her hands in a stupor. Then he slowly wiped off a large drop of melted snow that had fallen on them, paused, bent low and kissed them.

Inga wanted to say something, moved up nearer to him but said nothing.

"No," replied Stum calmly. "In the case of my wife the fault lies with me. I was not strong enough to make her obey, and never, under any circumstances, has a doctor the right to be weak."

"I think there is one man I would obey."

"And he has left?"

"Yes, he has left."

Stum dropped his eyes.

"It's getting cold," he said, "let's go in?"

Back in the room he adjured her in his usual gruff voice:

"Now you must understand, not an inch from

Davos. Move to another sanatorium if you must. I shall still be able to help you. Good-bye. Doctor Hoffman will take your temperature, put you to bed and confirm that you are not to leave Davos. Am I right?"

"Absolutely right," Doctor Hoffman quickly responded.

Stum left the two of them together.

And at once they seemed to grow taller, straightening up and lifting their heads. Each left the opening of the conversation to the other, or it may have been that each was deciding on the line she should adopt. Doctor Hoffman felt for her instruments, which she always carried in her breast pocket like a charm, and said in a business-like manner:

"Let me have your thermometer, please."

"I don't remember where it is."

"Do you think you won't need it any longer?"

"I don't know."

"Tell me, why have you decided that you were strong enough to leave?" Doctor Hoffman asked, dropping her professional manner.

"Because I feel perfectly well. Yes, yes, I do! You can't know how I feel, can you? And then because everyone here is a liar!"

Inga said all this in one breath, raising her voice to a near shriek on the last word, as if it was a hurdle she had raced and taken. The effect of her words on the other woman made her launch a new attack:

"Yes, everyone is a liar, and Doctor Klebe too. And you!"

The sight of Doctor Hoffman's confusion, her hands helplessly covering her face, filled Inga with a sensation of heady triumph. She trembled with joy, a strength she never suspected was in her, surging to her head. Carried away, quite recklessly now, she made another thrust:

"You are a liar!"

Doctor Hoffman drew her hands away from her face. It was pale, her lower lip quivered like a child's, strands of soft hair escaped and clung limply to her forehead.

"Then go. Good riddance. It will be best for everyone concerned," she said, breathing deeply after each word, and walked to the door with dragging steps.

She opened the door, pushing it against the major, who was about to knock, but she neither stopped nor could she reply to his ready greeting.

Inga rushed towards him:

"Dear, dear Major! How did it happen that both you and I are leaving Arktur on the same day?"

He stood in the doorway looking at himself in embarrassment and apology for his clothes which were not quite suitable for social calls: he was wearing high felt boots, a fur coat, the edge of a woollen scarf showing above his coat collar. He had his fur cap under his arm and carried

his gramophone in one hand and his umbrella and sun-goggles in the other.

"What a pity we're taking different trains," Inga continued. "How marvellous that you've decided to leave the mountains. You're not afraid, are you? I'm not. It's all a lot of nonsense made up by doctors. Enough, enough of doctors! Do you know what? Do you know what?"

She pulled all the things he was holding out of his hands and dragged him into the room. He obeyed her clumsily. He looked at her with tenderness and thought that now at last he would ask her if she had been angry at him that day when he had leaned so close to her and she had pushed him away. It worried him because never again had such a breath-taking conversation been repeated and he wondered if the fault lay in that daring impetuosity of his or maybe—good God!—maybe in his damned timidity.

"Do you know what?" Inga repeated. "In Locerno, you are going to Locerno, aren't you? well then, there beneath the palm-trees, there are palms there, aren't there? Take your notebook out and count how many days, hours and minutes you spent on the balcony in Davos, count the ampules of calcium injected into you, the number of times you played the scale on the piano at Arktur, and then seal up your little notebook with sealing wax and start a

new, a completely new life! Will you? Will you?"

She did not let him put in a word and he only gazed at her in admiration and knew that he would never, never be able to ask her if she had been angry with him or—oh!—could it have been simply feminine subterfuge?

And now he stood holding her thin hands until she took them away and armed him again with his gramophone, umbrella and sun-goggles.

"Go, go! And never, never come back!"

She led him out into the corridor and when he started down the stairs she put her hands on his shoulders. This caress brought tears to his eyes. He wiped them and put on his goggles.

It was snowing. Snow lay on the path, clung to the door and streaked the window-panes with its tears.

The major walked out first and held the door open for Karl, who was carrying his luggage: a hold-all, a canvas bag and a collection of walking-sticks slung over his shoulder, and two large suitcases one in each hand. Doctor Klebe, in his white coat, stopped on the threshold. It was time to say good-bye.

"Not a very good day for travelling," the doctor said.

The major opened his umbrella and stood motionless without saying a word.

"I hope this damned slush will do you no harm," the doctor said.

The major made no reply. He was covered with snow, water started dripping off his umbrella and patches of melted snow formed round his feet.

"Shall we start, Herr Major? Otherwise we'll have to be dug out with spades," Karl smiled.

The Major made a helpless gesture with his hand as if to say: it's all over!

"Good-bye, Herr Doctor," he said sadly.

"God speed, Herr Major."

They shook hands and the major started down the path after Karl. When they had gone a matter of ten paces or so they heard a woman's voice:

"Good-bye, dear Major, until we meet down there in the valley!"

The major looked back. Inga was waving her handkerchief from her balcony and all he could see through the crowding snow-flakes was the flashing of her hand and handkerchief. He raised his umbrella as high as he could, then lowered it down to the ground, and saw the handkerchief waving faster and faster in reply to his salute.

Doctor Klebe found the scene unbearable and suddenly felt feverish. He hurried to his room and only somewhere along the way heard the slamming of the front door.

The day being a holiday there were guests to dinner. Inga had a small table set for her too

because she was going away. She sat looking about her with enjoyment at the strange and familiar faces in the room.

The table at which the English couple sat attracted her particularly. She felt grateful to them because on Easter day the preacher's wife had sent her a card. It was a spring landscape, a scenery of hope, coloured by an amateur—a blue stream, a budding willow and above it one of Rafael's cherubs, traced through violet tracing-paper. Inga wanted to thank the kind lady who was busy with her guests, and she kept trying to catch her eye.

But the couple were taken up with their guests. They burst into easy, frequent laughter over what they had just read in the newspapers strewn on the floor around them. They received stacks of newspapers and the mail was a weakness of theirs. Every day before dinner they would sit in the hall reading long letters from all the ends of the earth, as if the imaginary walks they took to their correspondents and back were a necessary stimulant for their appetites. Until dinner was served they sat at the table reading the papers and examining their Easter cards in their easy drawing-room manner. They were gay all through the meal, absorbed in their own company and noticing nothing.

After dinner Inga started on her round of farewells in true German fashion, leaving nobody out: handshakes and wishes of good luck to those she

knew, pleasant nods to those she did not. Going from table to table she grew more and more excited, colour flooded her face. She realized that something special was happening. She was leaving Arktur! Inga was certain that everyone was really fond of her—there was so much warmth in their parting words and she passionately wished them all the good and all the happiness in the world. She almost hugged Lizl, who was dressed up in starched Sunday clothes and shook Inga's hand vigorously, repeating her farewells loudly:

"Good-bye, good-bye, thank you, you were so kind to me!"

Then Inga rushed to the English couple's table and, gasping for breath, said to the preacher's wife:

"I want to thank you for your Easter greeting, Madame, it was exceedingly kind of you and made me very happy!"

The preacher and his wife fell silent. The wife drew up all the wrinkles on her brow so that her eyebrows joined the line of her hair and looked Inga over from head to foot.

"Oh, Easter," she drawled in careful but bad German, and her tone at once explained that although a holiday like Easter permitted one to stoop to any nation, that did not mean that any further intimacy could be hoped for.

She nevertheless touched Inga's proffered hand. But when Inga went up to the preacher he stared at her with rage. His jaws were busy with a

piece of soft cake, yet it seemed as though he had some chewing-gum in his mouth and that as soon as he had finished with it he would spit it into the eye of the girl who had dared to thrust herself upon him. He raised his forefinger slowly to his forehead. The others smiled foreseeing a joke. The preacher's eyes left Inga's face and travelled down to her trembling and slightly drooping hand. His forefinger seemed to freeze to his forehead. You could not tell if he was puzzled by the fact that Inga had come up to his table or if he was trying to tell her she was a fool. His guests were already beginning to chuckle, while Inga stood with outstretched hand.

"I am leaving. I wish to say good-bye," she said with an effort.

Suddenly jerking a handkerchief out of his pocket, the preacher began to rub his eyes and sob clownishly. His friends roared with laughter.

Feeling a pain she could not understand, Inga laughed too, blanching and coughing, and in despair proffered her hand again. Continuing to rub his cheeks with the handkerchief, the preacher at last made a great show of bidding the funny girl good-bye, to the great amusement of the rest of his party.

Inga rushed out of the dining-room.

This insult, coming suddenly from an unexpected quarter, made her departure easier: she could not possibly stay on any longer! But when her luggage had been carried down the stairs, she

tiptoed quickly to the next room and glancing about her furtively, touched the door handle. Her heart stopped strangely and then suddenly she could hear its beating very clearly. Inga stood motionless for a minute and then pressed the handle softly. The door was locked. Inga made her way to the lift, still on tiptoe but with no hurry now.

She left in a horse-drawn sleigh and Doctor Klebe—according her the courtesy due to a woman—escorted her as far as the station.

It was the afternoon rest hour and the town, which attuned its life to that of the sanatoria, was deserted: the shops and offices were closed and there were no buses in the street. Inga's departure seemed to be watched by that very stillness. Even the houses looked on, making a mental note: there she is leaving the mountains, look, she's leaving Davos!

Before boarding the train, she wanted to say something sincere, something that would express the commotion in her breast, but Klebe, when she came up to him, looked at her with such gloomy iciness that all she said was "Good-bye," with a smile, adding as a coquettish challenge, "I took my temperature, it's thirty-eight!"

"That's bad," Klebe shook his head, not at all surprised, and suggested what drugs she ought to take to help her through her journey.

When the train began to move Klebe walked along with it for a pace or two. Inga waved to

him from her window with her glove. He raised his hat for a moment, then turned round and walked away.

Klebe felt feverish and told himself that if his temperature was higher than Inga's then his test would prove positive (he had asked Doctor Hoffman to test his phlegm that morning). All the way back he shivered in the sleigh. It had stopped snowing but the air was unusually damp, the road had darkened, and water hissed out of the ruts from under the sleigh's runners.

The minute he reached his room he lay down on the sofa, wrapped himself in a rug and placed a thermometer in his mouth. His thoughts were in a jumble and he fell into a doze. When he awoke he could not see the scale on the thermometer because twilight was deepening in the room, but when his eye at last made out the mercury column he shrugged his shoulders, refusing to divine his nature's tricks— his temperature was thirty seven and nine. He rang and told Lizl to fetch his analysis report.

Five minutes later Doctor Hoffman called through the door that she would like to talk to Klebe as to a colleague.

"I understand, colleague," he shouted. "How many in the line of vision?"

"May I come in?"

"You must excuse me, I'm not dressed. Push the report under the door."

He jumped up from the sofa, picked up the yellow laboratory report and dashed to the window. He saw the word "yes" in the "elastic fibres" column on the right side of the sheet. He made a step, paused, then started pacing up and down the room, from the window to the sofa and back again, with measured steps. Ignoring the piece of paper crumpled in his fist, he paced up and down for a long time, hands clenched behind his back. At last he settled down on the sofa again and read the whole report through. The number of bacilli in the line of vision was from five to ten.

Yes, Doctor Klebe had been giving himself too little thought, that was the trouble. He was always thinking of others. He had bought Arktur so that he could have the necessary treatment all the time and live in the mountains, live in healthful surroundings where there was no room for disease. Arktur had been conceived as a medicine, a guarantee and an artifice: it was to provide treatment and pay for it, it was to become eternity and at the same time the price at which eternity is bought. Instead, it became a bane, a glutton devouring Doctor Klebe's health.

And, blaming Arktur as he would a man who had committed an offence, Klebe turned over in his mind all the worries brought on him by the sanatorium, the creditors and the patients--all that he had lived through in the last few years, when his downfall had begun, and thoughts of

worries to come pushed out the thoughts of worries that were past, and everything became a jumbled tangle in his head again. Ever frightening emptiness stood up before Klebe with a kind of reckless triumph: empty corridors, empty rooms, a petrified cook in an empty kitchen, Karl smoking in the service lift, winking at Lizl with a lifeless eye, and Doctor Hoffman sitting on a pile of suitcases and bending over a microscope somewhere in the attic. "Yes" was pencilled at the far end of the corridor which echoed with strange footsteps, and someone read the word "yes" aloud, and Klebe shuddered in his sleep.

As soon as he woke up he took his temperature again. The joke was going on: there was no fever and he had stopped shivering. Klebe ordered some punch and started writing a letter to Alp Grüm. In the tone of an old friend, an ally even, he invited Levshin to return to Arktur, where from now on he would find everything ideal: nobody to bother him, peace, quiet, and even Doctor Stum had been appeased and would not reproach him too severely for interrupting his treatment.

So that the letter might reach Levshin as soon as possible, Klebe told Karl to post it at the station and busied himself with something else—outlining a treatment timetable for himself, planning to begin a new life as from the next morning. It was a repetition of previous decisions and Kle-

be once again recaptured the feeling that his disease would be conquered this time too, that it was an ordinary, though unpleasant, exacerbation. It was nothing new—Klebe knew what was required and what to do and a timetable tacked over the table meant that a tested and beneficial law was coming into force.

Klebe sipped his punch unhurriedly and when he felt warm enough he decided to find a little distraction by leafing through the pages of his beloved Edgar Wallace, recalling a passage here and there. He was engrossed in a half-forgotten adventure when Karl's voice, discreet to the point of mystery, sounded in the corridor.

"Herr Doctor!"

There was a pause, and Karl called again:

"Herr Doctor!"

Klebe opened the door. Karl was standing with his open mouth, breathing noisily. He stepped aside at once and Klebe saw Inga lying back in a chair.

He rushed to her.

"Herr Doctor," Karl mumbled. " I found Fräulein Krechmar at the station. She had gone as far as Landquart. It started there. Then they brought her back. It was quite a job getting here."

He tenderly touched her hand. The limp fingers were holding a blood-stained rag, which might have been a piece torn from a towel.

"Don't worry," Klebe said in a fever of fright,

"don't worry, Fräulein Krechmar. We'll take you upstairs ourselves."

In reply, Inga could only close her eyes.

"The letter? The letter I told you to post?" Klebe remembered suddenly.

"It's all right, Herr Doctor, I dropped it right into the mail car," Karl replied.

XIII

THEY SUCCEEDED in stopping the haemorrhage at night. Doctor Klebe remained on duty all this time and Doctor Hoffman relieved him after two o'clock in the morning. She immediately busied herself with towels, basins, ice-packs, bits of this and that on the bedside table which wanted tidying. At last there was nothing left to do and her eyes met Inga's gaze.

"You're better, aren't you?" she asked.

"Fine," Inga replied quietly.

"Don't talk, I can understand you without words."

"I want you to go away."

"Don't talk. I cannot leave."

"It annoys me."

"You mustn't talk. Why am I annoying you?"

"We've quarrelled."

"I won't talk about it . . . there is no quarrel between us. You are ill now, but as soon as you recover you'll see that we are friends."

"I don't want to."

Doctor Hoffman walked away to the wash-

stand, stood there a minute, then turned round. Inga continued to stare at her.

"I'll come back presently," said Fräulein Hoffman.

"Don't."

"If you need me ring, they'll call me and I'll come."

Left alone Inga fell asleep, and through her sleep she heard someone come into her room and stand in the door, but she did not open her eyes until morning. She felt very weak. The terror and anxiety she had gone through at the station and in the train, where strangers had fussed round her, was there no longer. She felt a lightness, but it was imponderable, remote somehow and too transparent.

She gazed round the room and noticed her suitcase standing by the balcony door. It was partly open and she remembered how they had searched for her underwear in it. Bits of white objects—shoulder straps or clothing—were sticking out; she looked at them indifferently as though they were no concern of hers or vaguely reminded her of something long past and forgotten. It all seemed to be associated with something that had happened long ago, something that had receded into the past and became tranquil and clear.

Suddenly, from this detachment and indifference, her fancy picked on several things, one after another, and she now saw nothing but these

things alone. Very cautiously she stretched her hand towards the table and took her handbag.

She found a tiny writing-pad and started to write, stopping for a long time over every word, putting her hands on the blanket, then raising them slowly to her face. She tore out the page and read with fixed attention word by word: "Dress me in a blue chemise with the blue ribbons. Dress—white, linen. Stockings—white. Shoes—light, low-heeled (house shoes)."

She folded the page in two and put under her handbag.

The effort made her tired and she lay motionless again. Tears rolled down her face, yet she felt light-hearted and calm. Gradually it became clear to her that she would get well and taking a very grave and firm decision she whispered:

"If I get well I promise on my honour, I swear I'll live at Davos for three years."

She pondered long—three years or maybe five—but thought that three would be sufficient and whispered again:

"Three years without a break."

She rang. Lizl came in followed by Karl. Both of them were friendly, inquired after her health and said she should not talk. Karl brought a letter which had arrived with the morning mail and told her that Doctor Stum had been called on the telephone and would arrive shortly.

The letter was from her father. She wanted to open it but could not raise her hand—faintness,

almost nausea, swept over her suddenly. She asked Lizl to open the letter and read it to her. Lizl read well, pausing at the stops and commas. The letter breathed of anxiety for Inga, and while she listened to it everything imponderable and transparent disappeared and was replaced by nostalgia. She had no strength to wipe her tears and they crept down her temples into her hair.

"Don't cry," Lizl said, finishing the letter. "You'll get well. It happened to me once: I lost so much blood and I thought: well, Lizl my girl, you've had your fun and now good-bye! Back home in my country there's a woman girls always go to when they're in trouble, you understand what I mean, they go to her right away if anything happens. And then, you know, it happened to me too, and she went and used the wrong instrument on me. Naturally, she denied it, saying 'Lizl, your arrangement's all wrong inside, don't blame the instrument.' But I know something about medicine myself! The amount of blood I lost! In one day I got to be just like you, Fräulein Krechmar, no better, horrible to look at! And look at me now! I don't even know if it was I or somebody else who had had the trouble that time!"

She brought a towel close to Inga's eyes.

"Shall I wipe them?"

Inga told her to straighten the things in her suitcase and place the page from her writing-pad on top of the lingerie. Mustering all her strength,

she raised her head to see how her request was being carried out. Then, calming down, she dictated a telegram in answer to her father's letter. Inga said she had been slightly ill, but was better now, feeling cheerful, and would shortly write in detail.

Before lunch, she fell into a doze again. Her coughing awakened her and before she had time to become frightened blood spurted out. She groped for the bell and in the same instant saw Stum and Hoffman entering her room.

What happened later appeared quite coherent and distinct to Inga. She did not, it is true, memorize things in their sequence, but she did not even wish to remember everything, she was quite content with the pleasant, sometimes indifferent, fragments of impressions and with their likeness to dreams. She remembered Stum's head bent low over her breast and the touch of his moustache which was cold and rather bristly. Stum's voice floated in from afar mingling with barely audible sounds of singing or speech—she could not divine what. The distant road came close up to Inga: with trees in bloom along the sides, and a stream rushing noisily down a nearby mountain. Perhaps it was the song of the stream that merged with Stum's voice. White blossoms fell from the branches into the stream faster and faster, until they covered the water in a dense shroud flowing towards Inga nearer and nearer. She saw Doctor Hoffman above her in a white coat

and her features began to change slowly, becoming strange, attractive and stern. Suddenly an odd sensation startled Inga—it was as if she were drinking cold, aerated water with prickly bubbles running all over her body—she was growing warmer and wanting to breathe deeper, and now she was drinking and breathing and she was feeling hotter and hotter and breathing became easier and easier, and at last she recognized herself—she was in her own room, lying in bed and covered with a new blanket, there was a hard mouthpiece clenched uncomfortably between her teeth, a rubber tube was stretched from it to a metal object which looked like a fire extinguisher but was not as beautifully painted. The table has been moved away. A strange woman with a flat young-looking face was sitting where it had stood. Her coat was caught at the neck with a brooch with a little red cross on it. Her eyes held a question: "How do you feel now?" "But what actually happened?" Inga's eyes asked. "Nothing to be afraid of, you see you are much better," the woman's eyes replied. "But what's that tube doing in my mouth?" "Of course you understand what it is, don't you?" the strange woman's eyes smiled in reply. "Am I really so bad?" Inga asked with her eyes.

"That's fine. Enough," the woman said, feeling Inga's pulse and wanted to pull the tube out of her mouth. But Inga would not let it go. She clenched her teeth and her motionless, wide-

open eyes repeated the same question over and over again: "Is it so bad? Oh, am I really so bad?"

"Come, let it go, don't be afraid," the nurse said.

Slowly, Inga unclenched her teeth. The taste of aerated water vanished without a trace, instantly, her body grew heavy as though hardening. She began to choke and screamed:

"Give it to me!"

She did not hear her own scream and in her terror screamed again:

"Give it to me!"

"Don't worry, you'll be all right in a minute," the nurse said in a trained voice, "I'll ask Doctor Klebe to send some more of this medicine, just to have it handy." And she gave the conical oxygen cylinder a friendly pat.

"I'll leave you for a moment," she said rising. "Don't be afraid, don't be afraid. You see how easily you are breathing now. There's nothing to be afraid of now."

She walked out with a light step intended to show that the scales of life do not oscillate, that if only man learned to walk properly he would overcome every obstacle in his way, for which purpose he was created.

Doctor Klebe met her gloomily. Nothing she could tell him could be pleasant.

He was deeply hurt: Doctor Stum had refused to call on him saying that he had not been invited. Not invited! A paladin, a humanist whose

praises patients sang at every street corner! He had even forgotten the duty that one doctor owed to another. A doctor was ill, but he passed by without stopping. He could not forgive Klebe for letting Inga go: that was his excuse. But his own interdiction had had no effect either. Then why should the blame fall on Klebe? Arktur was not a galley, nor was it a convict's barrow, and Klebe was no goaler. On second thought, Arktur was a convict's barrow and only one man was chained to it forever—oh poor, poor Klebe! Here he was, sick, exhausted, carrying out the duty of a physician and a human being, staying up till dawn by his patient's bedside and then going to his corner to lie on his back, alone, deserted by everyone. Stum, meanwhile, appointed a nurse for Klebe's patient and did not even want to visit the doctor in whose sanatorium he had made a considerable amount of money. To be quite fair about it Klebe needed a nurse himself, yes, yes, that very same nurse with the brooch and with the sour mien of charity. "But there isn't going to be a nurse for me," Klebe sighed. "I've got to push my barrow until I drop. I'm doomed, doomed!"

"How is our dear Fräulein Krechmar?" he asked despondently.

The nurse gave him a routine report: temperature, pulse, weakness and sweats, the fact that the haemorrhage had not resumed and that the patient was conscious and asking for more oxygen.

"Yes, yes," Klebe said in the same despondent tone, "but she must be told that a cylinder of oxygen costs 18 francs."

The nurse watched Klebe expectantly.

"What I mean is the poor woman will die anyway. But why should we suffer? We don't know if the bill will be paid."

The nurse waited.

"Oh, all right. I suppose I have to see her. Come."

He entered Inga's room noiselessly and looked intently into her half-open eyes. As he felt her pulse, his gaze wandered about the ceiling. He pursed his lips and shook his head. Then he released her hand. There were several syringes and an array of medicine bottles on the bedside table. Klebe touched them all and thought of two other drugs from Arktur's stock that had just as much right to be on the table. He decided to send them up, made as if to go but Inga opened her eyes and looked at him. He nodded, aware that there was something she wanted to tell him, and bent down lower.

"Levshin?" she asked.

"I knew it, I foresaw everything," Klebe replied happily. "I've written to him."

"Is he coming?"

"Yes, he's coming, don't worry, I sent for him."

Her eyes closed and Klebe tiptoed out.

He was moved. The girl's destiny interested him. His only regret was that all this was happening

at Arktur. He hurried along to the medicine chest to find the medicine for Inga. There was one particular drug he thought rather highly of—an iodine lotion for rheumatic pains common in cases like hers. True, the medicine was expensive, but it could not be helped.

In the hall he saw Levshin. With hands outstretched Klebe sped towards him, intoning, almost purring, something so touchingly sad as if condoling upon an irreparable loss.

"I am so glad, we are all so glad! Did you get my letter?"

"What letter?"

"You didn't get it? The letter I sent yesterday in which I wrote— Tell me, at what time was your mail delivered?"

"At midday, but I left in the morning."

"It's simply wonderful! What a coincidence!" Klebe was delighted.

"What happened?"

"The whole point is that nothing happened. It's just a wonderful coincidence that you did not get my letter and came."

In an effort to please Levshin, he kept adjusting himself as the situation demanded.

"Is it something to do with my next-door neighbour?" Levshin asked suspiciously.

"Yes, it's our dear Fräulein Krechmar," Klebe said sadly. "She thought . . . she made an attempt to go down into the valley but I'm sorry to say—"

"Is she in a bad way?"

"Oh, yes."

"Is there no hope?"

"Oh, you must never say that. But until there is some improvement—"

"May I see her?"

"Not at the moment," Klebe replied apologetically. "I don't think you should see her today."

"What about tomorrow?"

"I hope you will permit me to reply to that tomorrow." And once again compassion sounded in Klebe's bitter tone.

On the stairs, Doctor Hoffman was waiting for Levshin with a happy smile. They went into his room together and, opening the balcony door, stood in the doorway.

"I watched you come in, darling," said she, listening lovingly to the way this endearment sounded here, on this balcony. The charm she had revealed at Alp Grüm was with her now in spite of the habit of conducting herself with a certain degree of importance when she was on duty.

Beyond the balcony partition, there was life, small and familiar, cosily warm, but Levshin now regarded it with a different feeling like a man who had added new possessions to his former holdings. The woman by his side expected words, such as he could now not utter. The need to know what was happening there, on the other side of the wall, made him alert and watchful. He fancied he heard something like a groan

coming from beyond the partition, and because he did not know how to hide his feelings, he asked if what Klebe said about Inga was true.

"I don't know what he said."

"He said her condition was bad."

"Not to add—very."

"But what caused it?"

"Whether we know the cause or not is not very important now."

"What about Stum? Can't he do anything?"

"He said his visits would possibly be no longer necessary."

There was a note of vexation in these formal replies. A minute before there had been reproach. But he could not help going on with his questions.

"Does that mean there's no hope?"

"Camphor may help."

"How quickly?"

"We don't know."

"I want to see her."

Doctor Hoffman was silent.

"I must see her!"

"I'll see," she said without looking at him and left.

She did not return for a long time. He paced the room, then the balcony, thinking what he would say to Inga to cheer her up. He tried to visualize how she had changed. Mentally, he ran over all the things he had taken with him to Alp Grüm, thinking it would be nice to make

Inga a present, but was unable to find anything. He was on the balcony when Doctor Hoffman returned. She looked as composed as when she had gone out.

"I've prepared her. She's waiting for you."

He turned to go at once. Then a sigh escaped her.

"Why, oh, why did you come back!"

He stopped for a second, but made no reply.

It was very quiet in the corridor, on all the four floors, and it seemed as though no hand had touched Inga's tightly shut door for an eternity. Levshin stepped across the threshold and stopped. He seemed to have brought the silence in with him. He made no move until he caught the sound of quick, hurried breathing. He took a step forward.

Inga lay staring in front of her. Her eyes were so enormous that Levshin thought they took up half her face. They were clear and blue. Nothing had changed in Inga, but she had become small as if she had been ironed out, and her eyebrows and the skin on her forehead, so mobile before, had lost their restlessness. Her shoulders twitched slightly with every breath she took and they were as narrow as a child's.

Standing at a distance, Levshin waited for some movement or sign from her, but she made none. He bent down to the nurse:

"Can she hear?"

The nurse moved aside to let him come up to the bed.

He saw the light in her eyes waver and her gaze shift heavily to him. What he saw in her eyes could not be called joy. It was more than joy, it was exultation that for a fleeting instant tore out of the turbulent worlds of fear.

"You've come," Inga said very softly.

She breathed in short gasps as though tearing off bits of air. She wanted to raise her arms but they only stretched out on the bed.

Levshin took the hand nearest to him, a hand which had become almost weightless and began to stroke the tiny wrist.

"They've been hiding you," she dragged the words out.

"Forgive me, don't be angry," he said, trying to smile.

She did not seem to understand, but her lips trembled and it was reminiscent of a smile. With her eyes she asked him to come closer. He bent down low to her.

"You'll tell me everything later," she whispered spacing out the words, and when he straightened up she closed her eyes.

He stood motionless again and she lay as before with nothing to show that she had wanted to change anything.

Karl arrived with a cylinder of oxygen, looking like a fire extinguisher. He carried out the empty one carefully and put the new cylinder in its place. The nurse felt Inga's pulse, wiped the sweat off her neck, smoothed her hair back behind her

ears, hair that had long since lost its curl. Silence reigned again. And then came the distant sound of the mail running to Klawadel. The familiar call of the bugle floated into the room.

It may be that Inga heard it because soon an expression of sorrow and longing appeared on her face, distorting it, and Levshin saw anew how the slow disease was disfiguring her as it furtively prepared her for death.

The nurse said that the patient had to be moved to another bed and her voice jerked him out of immobility. He left the room with a feeling of having been thrown on the pavement from a great height. In his room he found Doctor Hoffman. She was sitting in the *chaise-longue*, hugging her knees, but to Levshin it was obvious that action was needed. He wanted them to act all the time, without pause. He wanted them to take every measure, to find some unusual means and to hurry, hurry. His body ached all over because he had been thrown on the pavement, but she sat gazing into the distance, thinking of something else, and he took it for heartlessness. There was no room in him for any thought or feeling other than what Inga's eyes had told him with such hideous clarity: that none of them, not a single person around Inga realized that she was parting with the only life she had! It was a tremendous event, an unprecedented event: she was parting with life, she was dying.

"I know you are doing everything possible," he said, "but Stum must be called."

"He's seen her. He stopped the last haemorrhage."

"But there may be something new . . . well . . . her condition may have changed and now he would have acted differently."

"Do you think he can do more than what we are doing?"

"Perhaps. He's bolder, more resourceful."

"We're acting under his orders."

She rose.

"You don't understand," she sighed with relief, "and it's a very good thing that you don't. It's easier that way. For only then can one be so large-hearted as you are . . . to someone condemned."

"If it had been me, would you be doing more than you are doing now?"

"No," she replied at once. "I'd be doing the same. It's awful what you're saying! But, my dear, here again you understand nothing. I would have been . . . oh, I would have been much more miserable."

She wanted to go but changed her mind and said:

"Only a little while ago you were annoyed because Inga made you feel sorry for her."

"Yes, and I'm ashamed."

"But what do you want to change with your belated magnanimity?"

"Don't sneer. It seems to me now that if I were to fall ill and she recover—"

"Oh, I've known it all along," she interrupted in a whisper, and, going to the door, added, "it isn't pity at all that draws you to Inga!" the words falling readily from her lips.

She lived in herself or rather in him, in Levshin, and he could understand it, but it was a life that nothing threatened, a life which struggled for something that was auxiliary, secondary, and could wait till tomorrow or the day after. But Inga's eyes could not wait. Motionless, they did not leave Levshin for a moment: they followed him into his room, into the corridors which preserved the sanatorium's undisturbed silence, they followed him out into the streets which with their orderliness, general courtesy and system could even bring a lunatic back to sanity. Taking short cuts through side streets Levshin soon reached the outskirts of the town. The rise was gradual at first, the road taking sweeping curves, and walking was only made difficult by the loose snow, which gave way underfoot here and there. But the mountain side became steeper, the road took sharper turns, and Levshin had to stop and rest. He could see the span of the valley and the town nestling at the bottom of it, the snow-covered houses looking like crystals deposited with loving care. He did not at once locate Arktur among these toy blocks, they all looked alike, and their extraordinary resemblance told him that what was happening to Inga was probably happening

in each one of them. Outwardly calm, the town was peopled with a fever of battle against death, but it was a sham, wearing the mask of an earthly paradise, where sufferings had been vanquished. Perhaps this was the wiser way for its fame flourished and its infamy was concealed, and this may have been what Doctor Hoffman meant when she told him that he understood nothing. But he saw the town as a place of hope, the way it looked and the way it had always appeared to him. Then he saw Inga's eyes and the town the way it was appearing to her now. To her it was a place of death. And he understood everything.

He went uphill towards a big white house. There was an atmosphere of well-being in the walks and paths. The branches of the firs swayed behind Levshin under the weight of two tame squirrels who followed in the hope that he would give them some nuts. The white house faced him with its frontage of a hundred balconies, where hundreds of patients were waiting for health. And it was clear to Levshin that there was a god ruling here and that god was Stum.

He had to wait for the doctor on duty. At Arktur the doctors were always hurrying but here, at the canton sanatorium, they could afford to take their time. When the doctor at last appeared he said that Stum had gone to town to call on a patient he was worried about and that Levshin could wait in the hall if he had the time.

Levshin asked whether they knew the sanatorium Stum had gone to and they said—to Arktur.

Walking down the mountain Levshin again saw the houses glistening like crystalline deposits in a repetitious design below. Their fusion seemed to bespeak their loyalty to the common cause which brought them here, in harmony with the valley, the snow-clad mountains and the sun. The thought that the town was wearing a false mask now seemed strange to Levshin. No, it was a town of Stum's good will. How often had Stum's helping hand been needed here! And he proffered it as a righteous man, who was the town's mainstay.

Back at Arktur, Levshin learnt that Stum had examined Inga but had nothing new to say. That meant that the hand of righteousness was not omnipotent, Levshin thought, and now the only thing to expect of Stum was that he should truly become a god.

It was morning. Levshin had lain half awake all that night. One minute Levshin seemed to hear moaning, the next he would be frightened by complete silence. He clung to the wall adjoining Inga's room with every fibre of his being and waited, waited. His memory retained but few of the thoughts overwhelming him. But he remembered that he damned the man who had first glorified tuberculosis as a beautiful and romantic disease, and all those others who poet-

ized this monster because often its victims were poets.

At daybreak he could make out something heavy, monotonous, that sounded like a wheeze, but he did not trust his own ears because it was too loud and the intervals between too long—he was certain that it could not be human breathing. But alarm tortured him. He dressed and went out into the corridor.

The sanatorium was just waking up. Karl could be heard at his work downstairs polishing the floor with a flannel cloth. A minute later the lift started on its grumbling ascent, clicking as it passed each floor.

Doctor Klebe stepped out of the lift. He raised his hand in greeting, opening his mouth to ask some appropriate questions, but at that moment the door of Inga's room opened and Doctor Hoffman emerged, tired and worn-out like a person who had not slept all night. She glanced from Levshin to Klebe, then pulled a pink packet of *Dames* cigarettes out of her pocket.

"*Ex*," she said as if in passing, addressing Klebe alone.

Klebe took two rapid steps and disappeared in Inga's room.

Levshin took Doctor Hoffman's arm. With slightly twitching fingers she tried to catch a cigarette which kept slipping away from her in the packet. Levshin led her to his room.

"What does '*ex*' mean?" he asked, striking a match.

"That's in our language," she said.

"I know, but what does it mean?"

She drew on her cigarette and exhaled a thick cloud of smoke, which immediately began to dissolve and vanish.

"It means *exitus*—the end."

They sat down side by side, saying nothing. Smoke curled above their heads. The discordant sounds of a new day reached the room from the street.

Suddenly a timid knock sounded on the door. Somebody pushed it slightly open with extraordinary care and the face of the Greek appeared in the slit. He retreated at once, pulling the door against himself, but he nevertheless whispered tactfully:

"Good morning. I only wished to ask if you were well this morning."

"Thank you," Levshin said, but the hairdresser evidently did not catch his reply and stood waiting with a smile of apology.

"Thank you," Levshin repeated loudly and as though in pain, "I don't need anything."

XIV

ALONG THE SIDES the roads were dry. The earth sent up a sweet spring warmth. Light filtered through into the darkest recesses. There was a hushed stillness in the air.

Karl wheeled his battered bicycle out of Arktur's gate, threw a pleased look about him, adjusted two empty oxygen cylinders which were slung on a leather strap over his shoulder, stood on the pedal and pushed off, riding downhill without mounting the bicycle. The gravel rustled under the wheels. Once in the street he swung his leg over the saddle and started pedalling unhurriedly. He sighed softly, then began to whistle. His whistling was very good—clear and loud, and the tune was ragingly popular—a hit from the film *Bombs Over Monte Carlo*. He broke off his whistling when he met other people coming towards him on bicycles, then, shrugging the gleaming cylinders into position, resumed his song, pedalling in time to the gay *Bombs Over Monte Carlo*

Before breakfast, Klebe walked soundlessly to

Inga's room, took a piece of paper out of his pocket and started tacking it on the door. The thumb tack slipped and fell on the floor. Klebe searched for it but it was nowhere to be found. He stood a while in some confusion, then with sudden recollection turned the lapels of his coat, and found two pins. He pinned the piece of paper to the door with great care and threw back his head as an artist does in order to appreciate his neatly written notice: "No Visitors." Then, as soundlessly, he walked away.

The day went on without the smallest hitch or breach of regulations: the patients lay on their balconies, some of them already relieved of fur bags and covered with blankets only; tests were made in the laboratory; fresh X-ray films hung drying in the dark room suspended from wooden clamps. Thanks to Doctor Klebe's efforts, two bridge games were in progress by about nine o'clock in the evening. Doctor Hoffman was busy trying to interest everyone in bridge. She wanted Levshin to play a hand as well but he replied glumly that perhaps he would play cards in similar circumstances next time if first he managed to lose his mind, but that now he would rather take a walk. Thus all the patients save Levshin and, of course, the English couple who had gone off to the *kurhaus*, sat down to a game in the sitting-room. At ten, when the patients were supposed to be in their beds, the game was in full swing and Doctor Klebe kindly allowed them another

half an hour, especially as he was having an extraordinary run of luck in the second rubber.

In the meantime, Karl admitted two men in bowler hats and long, old-fashioned coats. Plump, puffy of face, of the same height, they were as like as two peas.

"Good evening," they said to Karl.

Effortlessly, with evident experience, they carried in a light box, holding it upright. It was a little taller than they. Karl opened the lift door noiselessly. They got in with the box, stood it up between them, and it looked as if there were three of them, not two, standing in a row, the middle one made of wood and a little taller than the others. Karl handed them the key to the door and they went up.

They carried the box up to the door bearing the sign "No Visitors." Unlocking the door they went in. Five minutes later they brought the box out, horizontally now, and although it had become heavy, they bore it down the stairs quietly and expertly.

Karl held back the front door while they carried the box through. They said, "Good night."

Almost feeling their way, they pushed the box into a dark van. One of them got in behind the wheel, the other sat down beside him, and no sooner were the brakes released than the van began to glide downhill.

Towards the end of the game Klebe lost interest in his winnings and his animation, even

a certain noisiness, disappeared entirely. Bidding his partners good night, he went out into the hall and there met Levshin. Klebe glanced at his watch and shook his head:

"You're neglecting your regimen, my dear Herr Levshin."

"I'm not the only one, Herr Doctor."

"Oh well, we old gamblers may be forgiven, eh?"

"I was thinking of Inga Krechmar."

"Did you see?" Klebe asked anxiously.

"Yes."

"You saw her leave?"

"Yes."

"It was a grave violation of the doctor's orders. But you must pardon me if I say that one should not follow bad examples."

He spread his arms wide as if about to embrace Levshin.

"Allow me—a tiny lecture, purely medical, nothing more. You are very observant, dear friend. You should learn to see less."

"I do not want to live with my eyes shut. I am not afraid of life."

"No, no, you must listen to me. You should notice less. I can't tell if it's better for your life, but in the interests of your health it definitely is."

"And how is your own health?"

"Do you want to tell me that I notice too much as well?"

"No, I simply want to know how you feel."

Doctor Klebe pondered.

"Do you know, you are the first person who has ever asked me that. The first of my patients. And allow me to answer you in a way we doctors do not answer our patients. I am ill, dear friend, I am ill as I have never been ill before, matters have been going from bad to worse in every possible way."

He shook Levshin's hand jerkily and turning to run to his study, exclaimed with a forced smile:

"But don't pay it any attention, do not notice it."

On the day of the cremation Klebe had matters to settle with the authorities and a telegram to send to Inga's relatives. He was tied to his desk. The English couple wanted to lay a bouquet of flowers on the coffin and Klebe sent Karl with it. His own wreath Klebe decided to carry himself and leaned it up against the door-frame in the meantime. All that remained to be done now was to complete the accounts covering Inga's expenses and those incurred after her death. Everything had been included: tests, medicine, nurse, the doctor's last visits and the cost of disinfection. Pacing up and down the room past his desk, Klebe tried to remember if any little detail had been overlooked, and altered the figure 100 to 150. Of course he could charge as much as 150 francs for disinfecting the

room—after all it was no ordinary disinfection at resort rates, compulsory after a patient's departure, it was not only the steaming of formalin in an air-tight room. No, it was a general upheaval—everything in the room had to be disinfected separately and the walls re-papered, and paid for—in the good old way—by the responsible party, that is, the deceased. It was impossible to tell beforehand what a disinfection like that would run into, and it would therefore be safer to alter the figure to 200 in the rough draft of the bill. Klebe's eye caught the wreath by the door and he remembered that he had to hurry. The wreath was made of iron, adorned with a bunch of glass eidelweiss, neither expensive nor cheap; in point of fact it wasn't a wreath even but a chaplet, with no writing on it, and perhaps that was what made it so touching. Klebe hastily crossed out the figure 200 on the bill and resolutely wrote 250 over it. He gathered up his coat for it was time to go.

The way lay down a deserted country road, past scattered buildings. A sawmill broke the silence monotonously but rather pleasantly. Its circular saw wailed like a ship's siren and when a board had been sawed in two the wail soared up into the air with a high and melodious ring and before it died away, the saw resumed its deep-voiced song. Melodies awakened by the wailing and ringing of the saw began to spin in Klebe's memory. Some of the melodies he

remembered vaguely, others he composed suddenly, and his heart felt lighter after the anxiety of the last few days. Holding the wreath in front of him in two fingers Klebe strode to the tune of an imaginary, multivocal orchestra, concealed in the wailing and ringing of the saw.

And gradually as from a wind tunnel, a dream rose up from the music, whirling round and round. Arktur was rising from ruin. An English—no, not an English—a well-known Dutch millionaire (there were some Dutch millionaires staying at St. Moritz, for example) came to Arktur. He was tremendously impressed with the lovely, picturesquely located sanatorium, and asked Klebe to send all his patients away and put the whole of Arktur at his disposal. Klebe gladly complied and they became friends. Life, given a new meaning, now ran a miraculous and purposeful course. Klebe's friend proved to be musical. They gave themselves up to music, to the reading of modern literature. Sometimes they chatted about women, or they philosophized in a splendid, redecorated Arktur. Klebe received a new car as a gift. Karl, wearing a new uniform, trimmed with smart, narrow gold braid, sat at the wheel of the dazzling car, driving slowly along the main street. People came out of the houses to take a look at the car. Nobody asked whose car it was, they all knew: it belonged to Doctor Klebe! He was driving with his Dutch millionaire friend to Lago Maggiore where the

latter had a villa built for Klebe. They lived on Lago Maggiore and went sailing in a white yacht. All Italy talked of the luxury in which the two friends spent their holiday. *Il Duce*, a personal friend of the Dutchman's, came to stay with them. Doctor Klebe strongly impressed the *Duce* who began to envy the Dutchman, saying: the friends of my friends are my friends, and suggested that Klebe become a Catholic. Religion had never been a burden to Klebe. He considered it a convention and parted with the Lutheran church. By doing so he assisted in the *Duce*'s rapproachement with the Vatican, and the *Duce* appointed Klebe Minister of Public Health. Klebe returned to Davos to wind up his affairs. People implored him to stay, but he was adamant. He donated Arktur to physicians suffering from T. B., and the town's grateful population presented him with the freedom of the town, the ailing doctors putting up a bronze bust of Klebe in Arktur's hall and crowning it with a laurel wreath.

The weight he was carrying tired Klebe's hand. It drooped and the metal wreath clanged and scraped against his coat. Klebe took the wreath in his other hand and gave himself a mental shake. The crematorium was in sight. A group of people were walking towards the squat portal. Klebe recognized Stum, Doctor Hoffman and Levshin. There was another man with them, a tall man with uneven shoulders

who looked very familiar. Klebe only caught up with the group in the antechamber and walked in last.

When everyone had taken their seats Klebe walked up to the coffin with short steps, head lowered, the wreath in his outstretched hand. Fresh flowers lay on the coffin lid in a luxuriant heap and Klebe's little chaplet looked still more modest in comparison. But he added it to flowers with dignity: true sentiment was modest and Arktur had really done all it could for its patient.

Walking back to his seat, Klebe was ready to meet the eyes of all those present. But hardly anyone looked at him. Their faces were alien to him. To make certain that there was no animosity towards him, Klebe glanced at everyone in turn with woebegone friendliness, but no one reciprocated. And suddenly he met a pair of gloomy, narrowed eyes and knew them instantly. Major Pashich's gaze through his narrow *pince-nez* was reproachful.

Klebe missed his step. At first he could not even analyze the feeling that rose up in him. He turned to face the coffin and took his seat in the front row. A little later, he realized that he was offended deeply. The room became stifling. Tears welled up in his eyes. He raised his head, trying to gulp down the clot that stuck in his throat, and because the preacher started reading his prayers in a tearful voice and Klebe was

still unable to force down the clot, the tears rolled down his cheeks.

The wall, supporting the vault beneath which stood the coffin, had a picture of angels painted on it. The painting was done in the spirit of the decadents: clouds, vague and smoky-purple, floated up and away, and kneeling angels painted in the same purple hues gazed at the clouds in worship. The angels and the congregation all looked in the same direction—in front of them and all that could be seen of the angels was only their shoulder-long hair, their backs and the soles of their feet. And since the soles of their feet were nearest to the eyes of the congregation, they looked huge and brightly illuminated, still in the same purple colours, and the heels were painted in pale mauve. But so that there shouldn't be too many heels, the painter had pulled the hems of the angelic tunics over some of the feet, while others he wrapped in wisps of hazy clouds. Whether the heels were naked, cloaked in clouds or wrapped in tunics, it was nevertheless easy to count them and that was exactly what Doctor Klebe, lifting his head, did. At the same time he listened to the preacher and felt an enduring hurt.

The major had returned from Locarno. That was to be expected. A resigned soldier of fortune, he belonged to Davos and dared not leave it. But it had come about too soon and to Klebe it looked as though the major had arranged

the trip on purpose in order to leave Arktur. The major was adding insult to Klebe's misfortunes: he had moved to another sanatorium in a clandestine way. The whim of a pensioner who did not care where he spent his money was turned against a man so genuinely disposed to him and, Klebe remembered, had confided in him the secret of his sufferings and illness. Such was man, such was the human race. And Klebe had no wish to check his bitter tears.

The preacher read the final prayer, the watchman, who looked like an office clerk, removed the flowers and Klebe's wreath from the lid of the coffin, and the coffin itself began to sink slowly into the floor.

Klebe turned towards the exit with eyes red from weeping and he did not wipe his tears away. He wanted everybody to see them.

Outside the crematorium, they stopped, spontaneously forming a circle in which all stood facing each other. Klebe bowed in greeting. Nobody spoke.

Levshin glanced at the tower of the crematorium. It ended in sooty chimney openings that exhaled a pale spiral of vapour. Everyone followed Levshin's eyes and saw the vapour against the blue of the sky. The same thought must have crossed their minds because they immediately exchanged heartsick looks as if to say: there, that's the end of the road, in that thin smoke.

"Herr Major," Klebe pronounced, pursing his lips.

"Herr Doctor," the major growled and turned away his narrowed eyes.

"You did a wise thing by coming back. I have always believed that a change of altitude was as dangerous for you as it has proved to be for our poor Fräulein Krechmar," Klebe said with a grief-laden look at the chimney. "From a purely medical point of view, I'd like to know if you felt any worse as soon as you found yourself in the foothills."

"I did not feel any different from what I generally feel."

"However—"

"I came back because I like it here."

The major pulled out his dark goggles and started polishing them with a piece of chamois.

"And you have evidently found a sanatorium that is much more attractive and a greater saving on the pocket than Arktur?"

"Quite right."

"And just how long did you stay in Locerno?" Klebe's tone was ingratiating and obviously intended to hurt.

"Long enough to buy a copy of the *Magic Mountain*, which you had promised to get for Fräulein Krechmar, but failed to do."

"How fortunate that she did not taste this sea of pessimism!"

Suddenly Doctor Stum, who had been standing

motionless, took a step back, walked round everyone and stopped behind Klebe.

"I must have a word with you, Herr Doctor," he said with a frown.

Bare-headed, coatless, wearing his black suit, Stum cut the best-knit figure in the group, but his rolling gait made him look ponderous; he seemed to tear his feet off the ground with every step he took. He bade the company good-bye and, hands in pockets, started down the road towards the town. Klebe hurried after him with mincing steps, head inclined to signify his readiness to listen. Stum spoke with his usual directness for which people disliked him and which had the appearance of shyness:

"Be so kind as to consider me no longer Arktur's physician."

Klebe twitched and raised his head, then all his body stiffened, his feet alone continuing to move with little measured steps.

"And please cross my name out of your prospectus."

"But Arktur," Klebe whispered, struggling desperately to throw off his agonizing constraint, "Arktur is not folding up yet."

"There are plenty of other doctors."

"But your name . . . I value it so highly!"

"That's just it. So do I."

"Have I ever thrown a shadow on it? Surely this unfortunate death—"

"I was her doctor, do you understand?" Stum interrupted, halting suddenly.

He glared at Klebe, his drooping moustache twitching, his large and strong features expressing stubborn impassiveness.

"You were not her doctor, I was," he continued hoarsely, "and I gave you no right to let her go!"

"Good gracious! But this was a case of disobedience and you, a doctor yourself, are accusing a doctor!"

Klebe stood meek and dispirited, and perhaps his whole appearance rather than his words had some effect on Stum, who made no retort but started off as suddenly as he had stopped.

But Klebe saw that Stum was not open to reason, that his decision was final and that it was just his desire to have his own way that had blunted his features so. And all that was left for Klebe to do now was to uphold his dignity. His strides grew wider, he gave himself a shake and walking became easier. He said:

"It may be that this death has been particularly distressful for you. That is not for me to know. But, Herr Doctor, why should it influence your attitude towards Arktur? At your own sanatorium somebody dies every week and yet you don't resign your post."

"I am responsible for what happens at my sanatorium, Herr Doctor."

"Not for everything, I'm sure! How can you be responsible for death?"

"We must answer for life, not for death, Stum said and offered his hand. "I must hurry."

"Perhaps you'll think it over?" Klebe cried after him.

But Stum shook his head. He turned into a path and started uphill in his rolling, ponderous and firm gait.

And now Klebe was back at Arktur, a new Arktur of which it could no longer be said that Doctor Stum was the practising physician, an Arktur without Stum. Klebe would, of course, invite another respected doctor from among the many whom the patients valued for their standing, so to say. But the touch of individuality, the shine given Arktur by the fact that it was the only place where Stum practised besides his own famous sanatorium, would be gone forever.

Oh well, Klebe would weather this too, provided fate sent him patients, provided his affairs improved sufficiently to permit him to think of his own health. Klebe did not dream of wealth, luxury, motor-cars, which he had had in the past, of a villa on Lago Maggiore which, it had seemed, he could have had in the future. What was the use of all that? All Klebe needed was a good physician—to come down to facts, he was seriously ill—nothing more. Stum was an egoist through and through. He was as uncouth as a mountain shepherd. He ought to have taken a look at the latest X-ray of Klebe's lungs—

what would you suggest for the open cavities in Klebe's lungs, Herr Doctor Stum, what was to be done about them? That was where the real problem lay, and not in formal debates about patients doomed by destiny itself.

"Yes, Herr Doctor," muttered Klebe, "if you want to talk about being answerable for life, what about my life?"

Standing in front of the window he held his X-ray up against the light. The white spot under the right collar-bone was very clear and the whole picture, easily interpreted by an experienced eye, left Klebe with a heavy heart. He kept mumbling something, mentally addressing the irritating image of Stum, and looked through a pile of cards showing positive tests. He lay down on his bed to calm his nerves and dozed off with the perturbing, frightening thought that day after day brought nothing but misfortune, that there was hardly any promise of a future left, that life, barely flickering, was leading him by the arm, as though he were old and decrepit, into a strange, poor alms-house, there to be given a soiled bed in a dark corner out of sheer pity, and there to spit out his lungs.

He woke up coughing, his head and shoulders drenched in sweat, and for a long time he could find no peace from the gnawing pain in all his joints. Rising, he searched for and found in his table a blue-glass pocket spittoon he had not used for a long time, placed it near his bed and

nodded and smiled at it as to an old friend he had never thought of meeting again.

He switched on the radio, recognizing Grieg in the first few bars and listened to music that spoke of a mortal anguish he was so familiar with. The past swept over Klebe in its sweet and terrifying irrevocability, and pity for himself and hatred for the cruelly overpowering and victorious worthlessness, which crowded him on all sides, constricted his throat till he sobbed. But when the last notes of the music died away he wanted to go on listening to it. Switching off the radio, he rushed to his bookshelf and started searching for Grieg among his music, that had long forgotten the touch of his hand. It was the hour when the patients took their daily walks. No one was in the building. A mildness that preceded dusk was already tinting the sunlight. Klebe decided to go to the sitting-room where the piano stood and play some Grieg.

Excited and impatient, Klebe leafed through the sheets of music—some were icily smooth, others slightly rough with dust. Suddenly he heard Karl's voice outside the door and at once the voice awoke in his memory the sight of Inga sitting in the hall with a blood-stained rag clutched in her hand.

"Herr Doctor!"

"Come in!" bracing himself, Klebe purposely shouted the words, and his own shout made him jump.

Lizl came in followed by Karl.

"Excuse us, Herr Doctor, may we come in?" Lizl said briskly. "I hope we're not disturbing. We only wanted to say—"

"Just a minute," Klebe stopped her, "I don't know who this 'we' are."

"It's us, Karl and me."

She pointed to herself and Karl, then raised her hand and in a sweeping and very feminine gesture smoothed down her thick black hair.

"I know nothing of this 'we' phenomenon. I know Karl and I know you, Lizl. Speak for yourselves."

"We wanted to tell you—" Lizl again started.

"I told you to speak for yourself!" Klebe cried. "I took you on separately and not together."

"Tell him, Karl," Lizl said with a toss of her head.

"I want to be paid off, Herr Doctor," Karl said with his happy smile.

"Er . . . I see," Klebe said, forcing himself to calm down. "In what sense? You want—"

"I'm leaving Arktur, Herr Doctor."

"I hope you know what you're doing, Karl. With all this unemployment everywhere!"

"He's already found another job," Lizl said, "he's going to build a road. They're paving a road here in our canton. And the pay's better than here, with no delays, either. I'm going with him, and, please, accept our notice."

"Very well," Klebe said, "come to see me tomorrow during office hours."

"And make sure that what's owing . . that you pay us our—"

"I told you—tomorrow!" Klebe could not help shouting again.

"Karl, the Herr Doctor is yelling at me, why are you standing and doing nothing?"

"The Herr Doctor is excited,"Karl said tactfully

"Tomorrow," Klebe repeated.

"But we want our notice to be counted as from today," Lizl said.

"Get out!" Klebe gasped, choking.

"You see?" Lizl nudged Karl. "The Herr Doctor is chasing me out! The Herr Doctor might dishonour me next and are you going to stand it?"

"Shut up, you dish-washer!"

Klebe kept on his feet with an effort holding on to a pile of music. He felt feverish and could hear his teeth chattering.

"Herr Doctor, please keep within bounds," Lizl said, this time pushing her hair back with a bellicose gesture. "I wasn't a dish-washer for you when you were pestering me. Do you imagine that no one knows how you tried to get into my room at night? Karl knows all about it. Karl, why are you silent? Oh, you! There's no spunk in you!"

Klebe jerked the music off the shelf, the pile collapsed, pages of music slipped down and

spread on the floor like a deck of huge cards, the books falling on top of them. Klebe stood haggard and trembling, a cough tearing out of his chest.

"I'm sorry, Herr Doctor," Karl said, pushing Lizl out and retreating after her. His transparent green eyes grew serious, but he did not even try to pick up the books and music and only shrugged his shoulders in sympathy and understanding.

"Just like a woman, Herr Doctor," he winked in Lizl's direction and disappeared behind the door.

Doctor Klebe shivered. It was not the fever he well knew. He fancied a horrible likeness to a St. Vitus' dance in the helpless trembling of his hands and head. He stood rooted to the spot—what if it really were paralysis? He waited for the disgusting dance to stop. He forgot about his music. He only wished with all his being to be able to disappear, to hide in an inaccessible little crack, to roll up into a ball and thus lie low, so that nobody could find him. He was tormented with the thought that once again the door would open at any minute and he would be compelled to suffer more humiliation. He stood without moving. Staring up from the floor at him was a well-groomed, complacent, painted face, next to it another, then a third, a fourth: they were his novels by Edgar Wallace, which had fallen down from the shelf,

and the successful author was smiling from the covers, as happy as Karl. Klebe tried to move. His legs obeyed him limply, he stepped on the music, then straight on Wallace, stamping out his smile. He darted from corner to corner, then decided to take a sedative and went to the medicine room. Opening the chest he selected a small dark yellow bottle, thrust it in his pocket and after a moment's thought strode up to the sterilizing machine and selected a syringe.

He returned to his room, put the syringe on his bedside table, pushing the spittoon out of the way, then went up to his bookcase and pulled out *Pharmacology* by its back cover. Finding the right chapter, he read it through carefully without moving away from the bookcase.

He thought he had grown calmer, although his hands still shook. He glanced in the mirror: his cheeks and forehead were covered with a network of fine, pinkish veins, and the medical name for it passed through his mind. He did not like the look of his face.

He sat down at his desk, took out a sheet of notepaper with Arktur's crest in the upper corner, unscrewed the top of his pen and, leaning on his elbow to stop his hand from shaking, began to write.

XV

KARL WAS dusting the furniture in the hall when the postman arrived—an elderly, plump little man with curling moustache, who had been bringing the mail to Arktur for a number of years. They exchanged greetings.

"Is the Herr Doctor asleep?" asked the postman.

"He hasn't come down yet."

"You'll have to wake him up: there's a postal order for him."

"That's just what we need," Karl beamed, "go right up to his room."

The postman was back in a minute.

"The Herr Doctor does not answer. I knocked loudly."

"He's putting on his dinner-jacket to welcome you with a toast," Karl said cheerfully. "Come on."

"In the old days, in a case like this, he used to treat me to a thimbleful of kirschwasser," said the postman.

"And now he wouldn't give you a glass of water even if you were dying of thirst," Karl said.

He knocked on the door, listened and said quietly:

"In the old days he didn't think anything less than a franc was money."

He knocked again and listened.

"Hell, I told there was no answer," the postman said vexedly.

"And he was always on the dot with our wages," Karl said, listening. "You didn't have to look at the calendar to know the date!"

"Perhaps he went out?" the postman said, using his knee to hitch up the bulging bag weighing down his shoulder.

"Herr Doctor," Karl called, "there's some money for you!"

"Why shout?" the postman grumbled. "Perhaps there's nobody there. Is the door locked?"

Karl pressed the handle down. The door was not locked. He opened it a little way and took an uncertain step into the room. For a fleeting instant Karl stood without moving, then backed out suddenly, slamming the door shut, turning and pressing his back against it

"Hold on," he breathed, "maybe . . . maybe a witness is needed. Don't go. I'll be right back."

He ran down the corridor throwing his knees up high as if he were racing along a street, took the stairs two at a time and rushed to Fräulein Hoffman's room. There was no reply

to his desperate knocking which filled the entire building. He turned back and ran into Fräulein Hoffman coming out of the bathroom.

"Fräulein Doctor . . . Herr Doctor!" He could not catch his breath and gesticulated with his arms.

She knew without asking that she had to run just as Karl had done, to run, to hurry, to fly But she had a bathrobe on.

"I'll be dressed in a minute. What's up?"

Karl blocked her way.

"I think Herr Doctor Klebe is *ex*," he whispered, the word frightening him.

They ran downstairs together.

The postman was standing at Klebe's door like a sentry, a chair pulled up to support his bag. Doctor Hoffman entered the room first.

Klebe's face was pale yellow and as calm as if nothing out of the ordinary had occurred. He was covered with a crumpled bedsheet.

Fräulein Hoffman stood with her face turned away from Karl: she closed her eyes tight because she could not bear to look at Klebe. She wanted to feel his pulse, but sensed the iciness of *rigor mortis* and unnoticeably pulled her hand away. She cleared her throat and without turning spoke on one note:

"It happened several hours ago."

"Is he dead?" the postman asked from the door.

"I knew it at once," Karl said.

Fräulein Hoffman saw the syringe and the empty yellow bottle on the table.

"Death occurred from an overdose of morphia apparently," she said in her professional manner, bending closer to the bottle.

"That's to say, he committed suicide," the postman said. "It's my second case."

"The police must be notified, I know the regulations," Karl said.

He had recovered from the shock but was still in a fever to do something.

At this minute Fräulein Hoffman felt that a terrible change was taking place in the world, in her world particularly, around her. Doctor Klebe, who had been an active factor in her consciousness until this minute, had in a twinkling been replaced incomprehensively by a corpse under a crumpled bedsheet. An instant ago life did not seem to demand any attention, it was understood that not only did its course require any interference, but that it even carried people along with it. But now it had suddenly clutched at man, as though terrified that its course would be stopped, and the woman heard its panic-stricken howl: push, move, harder, faster, otherwise, see?. . . Look at the bed, look, look! It was impossible not to move. The axis on which Arktur had revolved had been wrenched out and had to be replaced. In the same instant that she recognized death Fräulein Hoffman realized that she was now

the head of Arktur and, like Karl, she wanted to act, to make decisions. But a wave of nausea came over her and she was afraid she would fall.

Her hand felt for her instruments not because she needed them but as a drowning man clutches at a straw. But as it came into contact with her rough bathrobe, her hand hung suspended in the air at a loss. Then, as if she had found the right answer, she snapped her fingers like a man:

"Karl," she said, "fetch my coat from the laboratory."

He brought it quickly, helped her to put it on and when she had fastened all the buttons she at once felt as though she had a firm support to lean against.

"Why are they scattered about the floor?" the postman asked, pointing impressively to the books and music strewn about.

"Search me," Karl said quickly. His face was rapidly losing its healthy bloom.

"Lizl and I were here to see the Herr Doctor last night. He was looking through his music. Perhaps he dropped it. Perhaps he dropped it as he stood there."

"When did you see the Herr Doctor?" Fräulein Hoffman asked, going up to Klebe's desk.

"At dusk. Or a little before that."

"And what of the Herr Doctor? Did you notice anything?"

"Nothing," Karl said, turning whiter still. "The Herr Doctor, I think, was excited. He was looking through his music and worrying."

Fräulein Hoffman was no longer listening: she had noticed the sheet of paper with writing on it lying on the desk and stood reading hurriedly, skipping over words she could not decipher. Then Karl, too, coming nearer and bending over her shoulder, began to read.

Almost the entire page was covered with large, uneconomical handwriting. The hand had evidently trembled here and there, but the signature was exactly as it had always been, the flourish as perfect as ever—a thin, airy oval with two small tails in it.

Fräulein Hoffman was about to take the note away but Karl stopped her:

"Fräulein Doctor, nothing must be taken away; I know the regulations."

He was radiant again. The only thing he had understood from the note was that his name had not been mentioned in it.

"A farewell letter? It's a custom with them," the postman said with a sidelong look at the bed.

"I'll make a copy," Fräulein Hoffman said, taking a writing-pad out of her pocket, "and you, Karl, prepare the notice for the door."

He nodded in understanding, selected a suitable sheet of paper, made himself comfortable at a corner of the desk and marked out the best way to space out the two words.

Then the postman, too, snapping open a small pocket of his bag, pulled out a telegram, twisted a corner of it with his fingers, and began to write. A minute went by in silence.

Karl was the first to finish. Sidling up to the postman he glanced over his shoulder: "The addressee has passed on. Senior postman"—and the signature written painstakingly in Gothic letters and resembling an exercise in calligraphy.

"What about the money?" Karl asked.

"It'll have to be sent back."

"Who's it from?"

"Herr Krechmar, Hamburg."

"D'you hear, Fräulein Doctor," Karl said, "it's from Fräulein Krechmar's father to pay for her funeral."

He winked at the bed and said to the postman:

"I wonder who's going to remit the money for his funeral?"

"Are there any heirs?" the postman asked.

"He was married, but his wife left him."

"She was too hasty."

Karl sighed.

"He was a good man but he didn't have enough money. Nothing but debts. That's why he—"

"I see," the postman said, "that's why he—"

Fräulein Hoffman finished copying the letter and all three left the room without a backward glance. Karl pinned a sheet of paper on the door: "No visitors."

"I'll go and ring up the police," said Fräulein Hoffman.

"This whole business is keeping me here too long," the postman grumbled.

"That's probably full of cash, eh?" Karl teased, touching the bag.

The postman blew out his cheeks and let the air out through his moustache with a wheeze.

"Advertisements. It's filled with advertising matter twice a day. It's a mystery to me that I'm still alive. Good-bye."

Lizl was peeping from behind a door, getting ready to swoop on Karl with questions. He beckoned to her sharply to come up.

"Our doctor," he said quietly, tracing a cross in the air with his finger.

Lizl cowered. She ran her hand across her throat and pointed to the ceiling: "That?"

"No," Karl said and poked his finger into his arm above the elbow.

"I don't get you."

"Injected some poison."

"You don't say!"

"Well, that finished him. The police will arrive and will start questioning us about last night. Come with me, I'll tell you how to answer."

"What about our money?" Lizl cried.

"We'll think about it," Karl said, drawing Lizl away from Klebe's door.

After calling up the police, Fräulein Hoffman came across the English couple on the stairs.

They were on their way down for their morning walk. They greeted her courteously and she wanted to tell them nothing about what had happened so as not to spoil their walk for them, but words escaped her lips of their own volition and before she knew it she had told them everything.

"The poor man!" they exclaimed in turn.

They were upset and kept repeating with amazed looks at Fräulein Hoffman:

"It's because of the crisis, isn't it? Oh, what a shame, what a shame!"

Then they checked themselves, and spoke in a completely different tone.

"He was such a nice man," the preacher's wife said, "but, to be quite honest, he was hardly the man to manage this business."

"And we were on the point of departing from Arktur," the preacher said.

He took his leave and walked down two steps. "The deceased was a Lutheran, wasn't he?" he asked, turning round, then continued down the stairs.

Going up to Levshin's door, Fräulein Hoffman kept telling herself that she had regained her composure, but when she looked into his eyes, eyes which she learned to read into during their moment of intimacy and which now demanded an instant explanation of her presence, she felt she could not do without his assistance. Once again she thought she would faint, and

when Levshin gave her his hand she almost wept from weakness and barely managed to reach an armchair.

"We've had another misfortune," she said without releasing his hand.

He stood with a towel flung over his shoulder. He had been washing and had not had the time to wipe his face. As he listened to her he tried to sort out his confused and clashing feelings. She soon got to the part where she saw the letter lying on the desk. And only then, as she read the hurried scribbles to Levshin, did she grasp Klebe's ornate message.

"No one is to blame for what I am doing.

"The illness, which is being treated at Davos, has a way of coming back. It has now called on me for the third time. Possibly this time, too, my recovery is a question of time and, therefore, a question of money. But then the question of money is now not even a question of health: even if I were well, there would still be no money in Arktur.

"Sometimes I dreamed of a miracle that would save me. But a miracle did not happen. And it is easy to understand why: a miracle means money of which I have none.

"They say that there is a country where miracles happen to people who have no money. Were I well I would go there on foot

to convince myself that it was only a fairy-tale. But to reach that country one needs money.

"I surrender.

"*Doctor Klebe.*"

"However you look at it, our Klebe was a kindly man," Fräulein Hoffman said after she had finished reading. "It's awful to say 'he was,' isn't it?"

"He was kindly enough," Levshin said, "because he could not have been better even if he had wanted to."

"That is philosophy."

"Yes, it's philosophy he died of."

"He was simply unfortunate."

"I'm not denying it."

Their conversation was slow, with long pauses, as if they were afraid of bringing out a wrong verdict, and the weighed-up words, the pauses and the final verdict on a man who went on living in their imagination in spite of death, helped Levshin to realize what it was in this sudden death that had stunned him.

At first he pictured Klebe as an integral part of Arktur, then Klebe, separated from it, drifted away almost indifferently and then Levshin saw that Arktur was dead. That filled him with passionate pity.

In front of him stood a high, graceful and very narrow building with toy-like wooden balconies leaning against its façade and resembling square, doorless rabbit-hutches. In the garden, as though piled for children, were little pyramids of stones with Alpine flowers growing in the cracks. The flowers were as tiny as buttons, but their colouring was generously and blindingly bright. Several timid fir-trees bristled up along the garden's edge; a path covered with sand and gravel sloped gently towards the street. The whiteness of the walls peeped out through the brick-red squares of balconies, and the shadows thrown by *chaises-longues* and one-legged tables crept along the wall from west to east as though hiding from the sun. The building floated in a world of blue skies, snow-clad mountains, pale green meadows and shaggy black forest borders. And somewhere high up above the third or fourth storey there was a proud white sign bearing the word "Arktur."

And although Levshin was still living at Arktur it was already becoming a memory to him, a deep bereavement like one's childhood. All that had been alien in Arktur seemed to have been taken away by Klebe, and like a memory of childhood all that was best now stood out in shining glory. And now Arktur was no more.

And then, the best there was in Arktur found expression in one being and Levshin had a vision of grey and slightly protuberant eyes,

reddish hair, a starched coat with important instruments peeping out of the pocket. He at once remembered all the jokes he had played on her; her sincere happiness when his jokes grew more and more frequent; her somewhat overbearing conviction that it was due to her alone that Levshin had been given a new lease on life at old Arktur, which was now forever gone.

He drew her head down on his breast, smoothed her tumbled hair, and suddenly he felt how good and simple it was to be with her.

"We must see each other," he said.

"Yes, we must," she took up loudly with relief, "but where, where?"

"Where the road turns towards Klawadel would be a good place."

"At the turning to Klawadel? And we'll see each other today? Please make it today."

"Of course, when else?" and he pointed to his books tied up into parcels.

"Does this mean you're packing?" she asked, her voice hushed again. "Already?"

"Is there anything to mourn over? It's the natural conclusion of all that has been."

"That's philosophy again."

"Which leads to life," he added, smiling.

She pressed his hands to her face and held them close and he was happy to be with her. They were silent for a long time and moved apart abruptly when they heard Karl's soft knock.

"Fräulein Doctor, the police have arrived," he announced in a stern whisper.

A change came over her: she remembered that she was in charge at Arktur and when she walked out of the room there was something in her walk which made Karl hold the door for her with a little, barely noticeable bow, the way he used to hold it for Klebe.

The day was filled with unexpected affairs and unexpected people. Arktur's creditors arrived: there were several tradesmen, a bank official and the accountant who had been checking Klebe's business ledgers. They held a conference in the sitting-room, their voices rising higher than was permitted in a sanatorium, then they wandered about the building singly or in pairs, stopping at the kitchen, the vacant rooms and balconies. Apparently, there was an argument when they gathered in the X-ray room, because even the double, padded doors did not muffle the sound of their voices. Shortly afterwards they went their separate ways again. One of them, a fat man who wore a green knitted vest and breathed noisily, got into the lift machine room and demanded that Karl explain how the out-dated mechanism worked. With soiled vest, he got out and proceeded to the laboratory where he looked into the microscope and demanded to know what it could cost. The bank official tried the piano. The accountant told Lizl to make some coffee and sent her to the baker's for brioches.

Nobody wanted to take a look at Klebe. It was only when they began to evaluate his study that someone asked Karl:

"Tell me, has the doctor changed much?"

This was immediately followed by a question put by the bank official:

"Is there a piano in the doctor's study, too?"

Then they locked themselves in the office and an assortment of tobacco flavours began to waft out through the transom window into the street.

Levshin approached the turning in the road shortly before sunset, an hour when the brightness of the day's colours fades, when silence is superseded by soundlessness. The left side of the deep Klawadel Ravine was bathed in the sun, the right lay in a shadow which grew deeper and more intense as it descended, gathering into blackness at the bottom. Houses showed through the trees where the shadow bordered on sunlight, but there the ravine began to curve, unmelted snow gleaming in white splashes, and to obtain a better view of the houses Levshin would have had to walk on further. But the appointed hour was drawing close. He turned back, convinced now that Klawadel was destined to remain in memory as something that was ever calling, ever close, but never to be attained—like a dream.

At the turning stood a solitary peasant hut with an old roof resembling a dilapidated hat and a narrow pendent balcony which served as

a means of communication between the living room and the attic. A thin, carved balustrade ran round the stairs and the balcony, and the shadow thrown by it girded the whole of the house like a checked sash. In the evening sun the house seemed to be transparent and only the roof gave it substance. There was no movement either within or around the hut and because of that the silence of the valley seemed to be complete.

Levshin walked round the house and saw Fräulein Hoffman. She was not alone but he knew her companion at once. It was Doctor Stum. Bare-headed and coatless as usual, he was striding beside her. He waved to Levshin from afar with an arm raised high and shouted, his voice cleaving the silence strangely:

"Our Klebe, eh?"

Coming up to Levshin and shaking his hand, he repeated this half-question, half-exclamation.

"Poor chap, he was in a terrific mess," he said.

"I wonder what I would have done in similar circumstances if I were in his shoes. What I mean is if everything, every detail was the same. Do you see what I mean? I don't know what I would have done, I really don't. Do you? What would you have done?"

"I don't know," said Levshin.

"But if neither you nor I know, it means that we approve and justify his action, doesn't it? That's it, isn't it? But if it is so then everyone

will start doing as Klebe has done. I'm sorry, but I don't understand."

Stum ran his fingers through his hair.

"Did you pay attention to the phrase at the end of the letter?"

"You mean the one about people saying there is a country?" Levshin asked, remembering the words.

"Yes, that's it."

"I don't see your point."

"I want to know your opinion about it."

"He was right," Levshin said, "there is such a country."

"Do you think he ought to have gone there?"

"No, I do not, but I do think it would be a good thing for you to see this country," Levshin said, and turning to face Stum met a fleeting, rather wily look in reply.

"That doesn't eliminate my question," Stum frowned. "To tell you the truth I do want to know what it's like in that country of yours, but, you see, my two hundred friends here, on the mountain, won't let me go. A year ago, I presume, you wouldn't have let me go either, eh?" He gave Levshin a somewhat self-satisfied look. "But now you don't care a hang about me. Ah, you're protesting. You don't agree. Well, I grant that I've exaggerated a bit, but there is truth in what I've just said: Stum has done his job . . . at least so far as you and so far as Arktur are concerned."

"Not so far as Arktur is," Levshin said.

"Why? Do you mean to say you think I should have pulled Arktur clear of the mire?"

"You should have pulled one person out of Arktur."

"Klebe? No? Then who?"

"She's here with us."

Stum glanced at Fräulein Hoffman.

"Yes, yes, I understand . . . I've thought of that before. Forgive me, colleague, I want to say that I realize how poorly Arktur suited your . . . your—"

Stum grunted something in confusion and annoyance. He was walking between them, trying to get into step first with Levshin then with Fräulein Hoffman, missing both, rolling from side to side and shrugging his shoulders. He was displeased with his verbosity and his frown deepened because he saw that something was expected of him. Suddenly, gently, even with a certain courtliness, he took Levshin and Fräulein Hoffman by their arms and addressed the former:

"If I understood you correctly you are satisfied with the way the Fräulein Doctor handled your case and are recommending her to me as my assistant?"

His moustache twitched, he clumsily nudged first one and then the other with his shoulders and kept falling out of step. This made them look like a trio of spirited school children.

"Thank you for your recommendation," Stum said seriously. "As for you, my young colleague, I must ask you to call on me at my sanatorium to settle the details of our future work together."

He stopped.

"I'm late, let's say good-bye." Looking at Levshin from head to foot he said:

"Not bad," and patted his chest as he would a horse, "not bad at all. When are you leaving? Tomorrow? Fine. Would you like a piece of parting advice? In your present condition the way to treat the disease is not to let it know that you remember it at all, it will consider you well and dare not attack you. If it tries to do that it will find that you have been constantly on your guard. You must be cunning in your dealings with it."

He gave his hand to Levshin.

"Well, what have you got to say to me?"

"How can I put it into words?" Levshin said, squeezing Stum's hand.

"Wait, you're crushing my hand, I didn't do much," Stum said quickly. He freed his hand with an effort, shook his head and walked off in the direction of the town.

Levshin and Fräulein Hoffman gazed after Stum until he was lost to sight. He seemed to have carried their thoughts away with him and they did not speak.

A branch of the road turned towards the river along the banks of which, protected by wooden

enclosures, ran a perfectly spaced-out row of young poplars with iron supports of an electric cable marching away into the distance by their side. The banks were as smooth as the sides of a bathtub, but the river's bottom was stony, and its surface rippled with tiny waves, as if the water was straining to move against the wind.

Instead of destroying the stillness, the ceaseless plashing of the water complemented it in a special way that was quite different from the way the peasant hut on the turning did. As one drew closer to the river and grew accustomed to its noise, one found greater enchantment in the overwhelming, silent tranquillity of the valley.

Levshin and Fräulein Hoffman sat down on a bench facing the water. Buds were just beginning to fill out on the trees but on the slopes where the meadows faced the sun the grass had already forced its way out of the ground and it was so invincibly bright that it seemed to rebuff the hues of the sunset.

The only movement they could see was in the river running down the mountain and they watched it in silence. The waves swarmed with countless colours which the water tried to swallow but could not; one moment a colour would be gone, the next it would reappear only to be greedily swallowed again. But all this varicoloured flickering was subservient to one mighty

tone—the tone of the sunset, so intricate and yet so simple.

When they got up to go, they suddenly wanted to come up close to the water, obeying the instinct that eternally lives in man. They stood on the very edge of the water, their heads bent. In the spring the river carries an occasional branch or a clump of yellow foam washed out of a whirlpool. An overturned toy boat floated past, diving and spinning, its torn riggings dragging a shattered mast. They followed it with their eyes for a long time.

Their route was marked with trees and heavy, tall masts supporting high voltage transmission lines. At first Levshin walked past the masts without seeing them, then he began to notice them and raised his head at every one. At one of them he stopped to take a closer look at the porcelain insulators on which the wires were suspended. Fräulein Hoffman thought his curiosity amusing.

"Aren't you afraid of standing under a mast like that?" she asked.

He did not understand what she meant. She pointed to a notice with a frightening zigzagging arrow and the word "Danger" on it.

He was glad to hear her laugh. He put his arm round her shoulders and they walked on with slow, perfectly matched steps, the way people walk when they do not want their journey to come to an end.

When they emerged from the avenue of trees they saw a tall, round-shouldered man going townwards down the road nearest them.

"The major," they said in one voice and stood behind a tree.

The major was wearing his warm boots, a thick scarf over his coat, and carried a walking-stick. He walked with calmly measured steps, but there seemed to be more weariness in his walk than before, and perhaps more sadness.

Levshin and Fräulein Hoffman glanced at each other with the merest of smiles, aware that this was Davos itself walking past them, bidding Levshin good-bye, to leave an eternal memory with him.

They waited until the major had passed from view and then they walked into the town where the lights on the balconies were already beginning to go on.

"And this has been our farewell," she said.

"Until we meet again," he said.

"Until we meet again," she repeated after a pause.

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